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COLLEGE FOOTBALL NEWS
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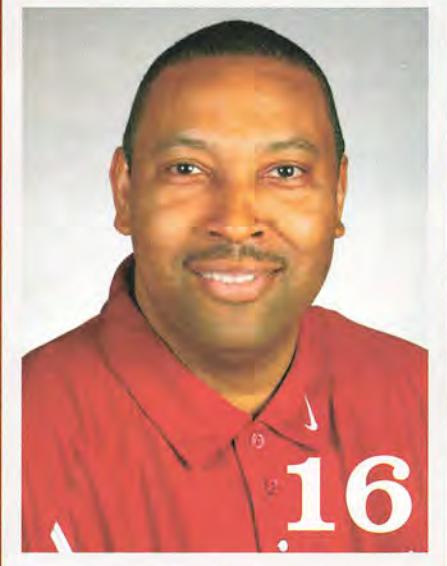
2006 SEASON FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Location	Time
9/2/2006	Hawaii Rainbow Warriors	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/9/2006	Vanderbilt Commodores	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/16/2006	Louisiana-Monroe Indians	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
9/23/2006	at Arkansas Razorbacks	at Fayetteville, AR	TBA
9/30/2006	at Florida Gators	at Gainesville, FL	TBA
10/7/2006	Duke Blue Devils	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
10/14/2006	Ole Miss Rebels	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
10/21/2006	at Tennessee Volunteers	at Knoxville, TN	TBA
10/28/2006	Florida International Panthers	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
11/4/2006	Mississippi State Bulldogs	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA
11/11/2006	at LSU Tigers	at Baton Rouge, LA	TBA
11/18/2006	Auburn Tigers	Tuscaloosa, AL	TBA

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Cover photo of Alabama Head Football Coach Mike Shula by Kent Gidley

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FOOTBALL UPDATE

Notes from summer as 2006 season approaches

It's no surprise that fall camp began without star receiver Tyrone Prothro on the roster. Prothro's long term future is up in the air, but despite the lack of an official update which was expected in June, Prothro's teammates indicated during a mid-summer gathering that Prothro would sit out the 2006 season.

Prothro suffered a compound fracture of his

leg in Alabama's 31-3 win over Florida last October 1. He had surgery, contracted an infection, then had more surgery. He has been on crutches and in rehabilitation for months.

Prothro, a 5-8, 175-pound three-letter winner, has never been redshirted. He would have a year of eligibility remaining for 2007, and conceivably could delay his senior year

until 2008 with a sixth-year hardship waiver if circumstances required it.

"Pro would love to be out there, but he knows it's not his time yet," said Alabama halfback Kenneth Darby. "I think he's got it on his schedule to come back next year."

At times in July, Prothro would discard his crutches and walk without assistance for the first time since the injury, although he still used the crutches at other times.

Prothro was still making headlines for his on-field performance this summer, however, as he was honored for his amazing catch behind the back of a Southern Miss defender last year, winning ESPN's ESPY award for best sports play of the year.

A Shift on the Line

Intriguing new possibilities about Alabama's offensive line sprang up in the summer when last year's starting right guard, sophomore B.J. Stabler, told **'BAMA** that he had been working at the right tackle position and preparing himself to play either position.

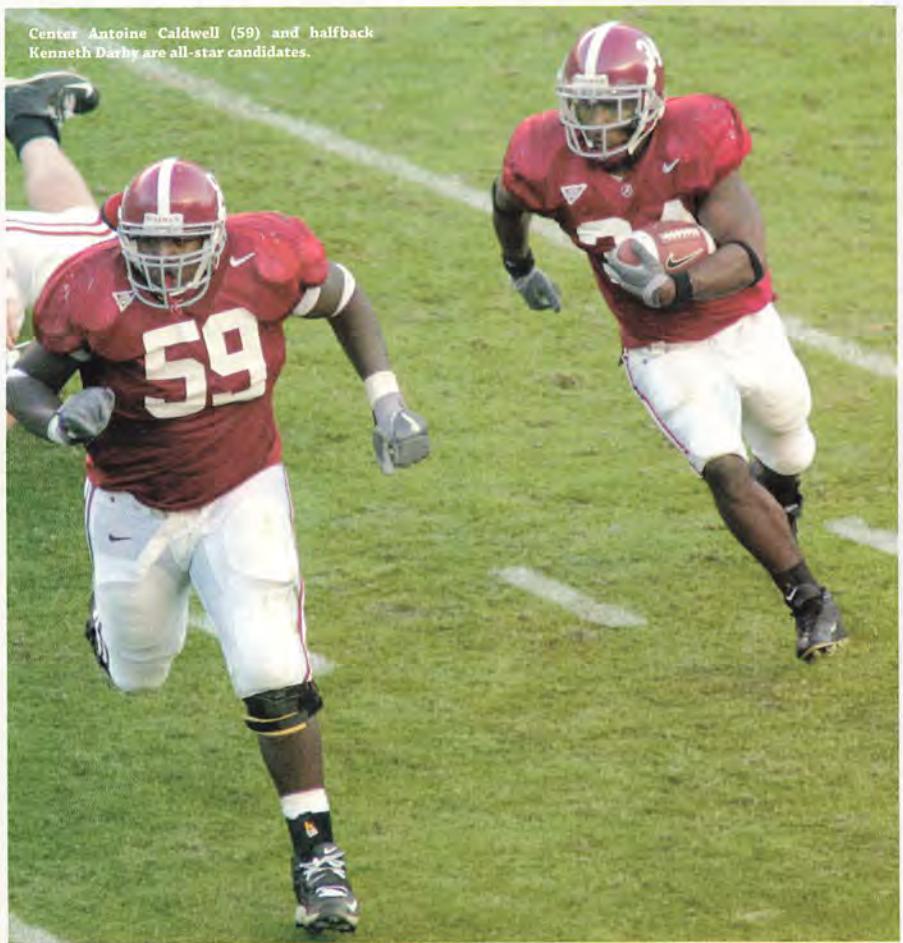
Stabler said he started studying at right tackle in June.

"They have been talking to me about playing (right) tackle," he said. "I'm not sure what's going to happen, but I'm trying to learn both positions."

Such a move would open up room for Justin Britt, who was a defensive tackle last year, to potentially move in at right guard where he worked in the spring on a limited basis as he recovered from shoulder surgery. At the same time it would create a head-to-head competition between Stabler and two-year starter at right tackle Kyle Tatum.

Antoine Caldwell, Alabama's first-string center when fall camp started, said that Britt and the possibility of other newcomers seeing the field

Center Antoine Caldwell (59) and halfback Kenneth Darby are all-star candidates.



University of Alabama

as true freshman gives the Crimson Tide offensive line great hope of something it has been lacking in recent years.

"Justin Britt has been working hard and he will give us some depth," Caldwell said. "We might require one or two of our freshman to come in here and play early, also."

Major speculation has risen about whether Andre Smith can come into fall camp and win a starting spot at left tackle over junior Chris Capps, who was often beleaguered in 12 starts last year.

Smith, Caldwell said, has the tools to play offensive line as a freshman.

"I have worked with Andre going over plays and stuff like that," Caldwell said. "I can see him stepping in early. He's 350 pounds, but he runs like he's 200 pounds. He seems like he wants to learn and he's real bright."

Caldwell was on the verge of breaking into the playing rotation as a true freshman before an injury setback forced him into a redshirt season. He's been talking with Smith and Shades Valley's Taylor Pharr over the summer about the Alabama offense.

"It's real tough (to play offensive line as a true freshman)," he said. "You've got to come in kind of with a chip on your shoulder. And to be able to take coaching is probably the biggest thing. Technique is also a big step. He's definitely got all the tools, and all the hype behind him. I definitely hope that works out."

Quarterback Still Hurt

Alabama's summer passing skeleton sessions in June and July were generally led by quarterback John Parker Wilson, with redshirt freshman Jimmy Barnes taking repetitions with the second unit. Absent from the summer workouts was senior Marc Guillon, the presumed back-up quarterback to Wilson. Wilson said that Guillon was still recovering from a broken hand suffered off the field after spring training. Guillon was healthy in the spring for the first time in his career at Alabama. A back injury limited Guillon for the entirety of the 2005 season.

Dismissed

After being suspended by Mike Shula for the Cotton Bowl and missing spring training when a teammate slammed him and broke his leg in a scuffle, Chris Keys was dismissed from the Crimson Tide football team on June 6th for violating team rules.

At one time, Keys was considered one of the best prospects in the country, even though he did not play his senior year after being suspended from his high school in Louisiana and denied eligibility to transfer and play in the state of Alabama.

Keys played as a true freshman at Alabama, mostly on special teams, but with limited time at safety. He was expected to compete for playing time at linebacker before his dismissal.

Recovering

Sophomore running back Glen Coffee, who missed all of spring with an injury, underwent long-speculated surgery for sports hernia in the first week of June. The surgery was performed by Dr. William C. Meyers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Kenneth Darby had surgery for the same ailment last year.

The typical recovery time varies greatly with the injury, and can take as long as three months, but late summer reports indicated that Coffee was nearing a clean bill of health entering fall camp. Coffee has a redshirt year available to him, and Alabama is deep at running back for 2006 if Coffee can't go in the fall.

Coffee, from Fort Walton Beach, Florida, played in every game last season. He was the Tide's third leading rusher, with 179 yards on 48 carries and had eight receptions for 91 yards and a touchdown.

Missing

Cornerback Travis Robinson's departure was announced in June as well. Robinson played as a true freshman but was plagued with injuries for most of his career. The sophomore cornerback suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament (knee) in 2005.

Conspicuously out of town in the summer was junior receiver D.J. Hall, who was back in Fort Walton Beach at his parents' house. Some sources had indicated that Hall's return to the team for the fall is questionable, causing a panic, but Shula later said that Hall would be back with the squad for the fall. Hall was also suspended for the Cotton Bowl for unspecified reasons.

Hall was Alabama's most consistent receiver last year, and he, Keith Brown and Matt Caddell were the only receivers with significant experience returning in 2006.

Nikita Stover and Will Oakley, both of whom missed the majority of spring training with injuries, are next in line at receiver. Incoming freshman Mike McCoy is the only listed receiver signee, but Javier Arenas (cornerback) and Earl Alexander (quarterback) would both stand significantly better chances of playing early at receiver than at their respective noted positions. Mountain Brook two-way player Jake Jones was signed as a defensive back at Alabama, but his summer was spent working on timing with quarterbacks Wilson and Barnes at the receiver

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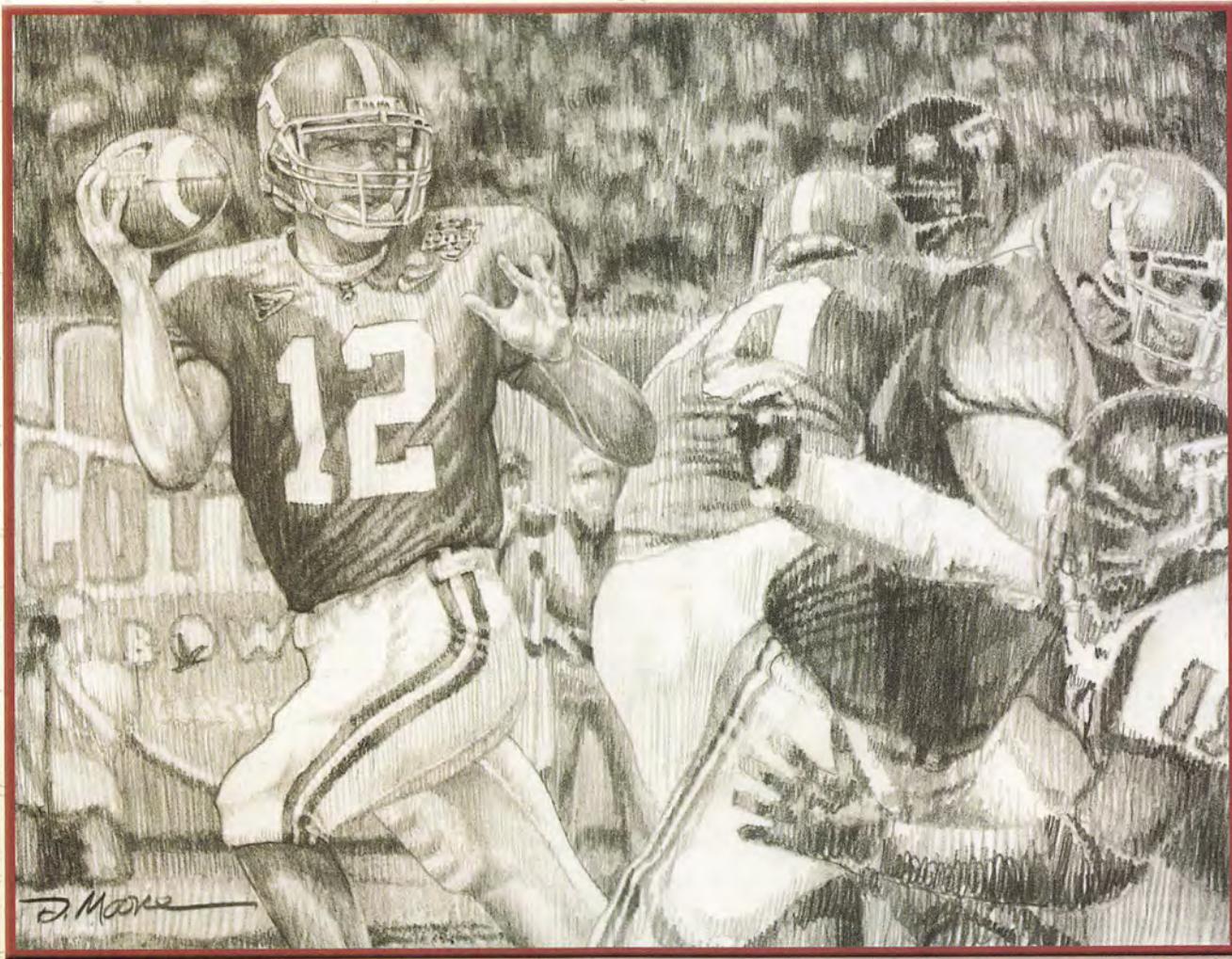


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position during pass skel drills. Wilson said Jones was, "very quick," and ran crisp routes.

Summertime Blues

Senior Juwan Simpson had an unfortunate brush with the law over the summer, and at a court appearance on June 20 he faced a misdemeanor marijuana and gun charge. Simpsion agreed to enter

drug court in an effort to resolve the drug charge as quickly as possible. The agreement required Simpson to perform community service and undergo regular drug testing. The gun charge was continued while the origins of the gun, which was initially reported as stolen, were further investigated.

Shula did not disclose what if any disciplinary measures would be imposed, but if Simpson is suspended, then Demarcus Waldrop looks to the next in line at weakside linebacker. Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines has said he doesn't envision either middle linebacker, Matt Collins or Prince Hall, sliding to one of the outside positions, and Waldrop clearly seems like the best backer after those two and strongside linebacker Terrence Jones.

Who's Number One?

The Birmingham News has been doing its spring preview of Southeastern Conference football for about half a century, soliciting selections from the league's 12 sports information directors. Other than in the 1970s when Alabama was the annual pick, the poll has not been particularly accurate.

This year's poll had Auburn and LSU tied for first in the SEC West, followed by Alabama, Arkansas, Ole Miss and Mississippi State. In the East, it was Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, Kentucky and Vanderbilt.

(Now, as always, a school's media relations

director can't vote for his own school.)

They also ranked all 12 schools on "Overall Strength." That result was 1. LSU, 2. Florida, 3. Auburn, 4. Georgia, 5. Alabama, 6. Tennessee, 7. Arkansas, 8. South Carolina, 9. Ole Miss, 10. Kentucky, 11. Mississippi State, 12. Vanderbilt.

Cruise

Alabama Head Coach Mike Shula and staff were out of the office for a large part of July - and in fact out of the country for part of it - as they departed on their third annual Cruising with the Tide aboard the Sovereign of the Seas cruise ship.

Pre-Season Picks

Three University of Alabama football players were named to the 2006 preseason All-SEC football squad selected by Pete Futak of the College Football News.

Sophomore center Antoine Caldwell was a first-team selection, while senior right tackle Kyle Tatum and senior defensive tackle Jeremy Clark were second-team picks by College Football News.

Caldwell started all 12 games for Alabama as a redshirt freshman in 2005 and moved to center for the 2006 AT&T Cotton Bowl win over Texas Tech. He was rated as the 23rd best player in the SEC by College Football News.

Tatum is back for his fourth season with the Crimson Tide and his third season at offensive tackle after playing on the defensive line his freshman year. He started 11 games for Alabama last years and leads all UA offensive linemen with 23 career starts. He has 32 total starts for the Crimson Tide, which includes nine career starts on the defensive line as a redshirt freshman in 2003.

Clark is one of Bama's most experienced defensive linemen with 34 career games. He has logged 60 career tackles, including 4 1/2 sacks and 7 1/2 tackles for loss. Clark played in all 12 games last year and recorded 16 tackles.

Although he was not a first or second team preseason All-SEC selection, senior running back Kenneth Darby (Huntsville) was rated as the 16th best player in the SEC.

Darby has 2,408 career rushing yards at Alabama and enters the 2006 season just 1,076 yards shy of Shaun Alexander's career rushing record. Darby posted back-to-back 1,000 yard seasons as a sophomore (1,062) and junior (1,161) and seeks to become the first player in school history with three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons.

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GUESS AT PRE-SEASON DEPTH CHART

Here is how Alabama's depth chart was expected to look with the start of fall workouts on August 8. Information is subject to change. Not all players are included.

OFFENSE	DEFENSE
Split End	Left End
11 Matt Caddell (6-0, 181, Junior) 80 Mike McCoy (6-3, 195, Freshman) 82 Earl Alexander (6-4, 208, Freshman) 25 Aaron McDaniel (6-1, 176, Sophomore)	92 Wallace Gilberry (6-3, 254, Junior) 91 Chris Harris (6-5, 244, Senior) 95 Brandon Deaderick (6-4, 230, Freshman)
Flanker	Left Tackle
22 D.J. Hall (6-3, 190, Junior) 7 Will Oakley (6-1, 188, Sophomore) 9 Nikita Stover (6-1, 190, Sophomore) 28 Javier Arenas (5-9, 175, Freshman) 39 Jake Jones (6-0, 185, Freshman)	99 Jeremy Clark (6-3, 305, Senior) 97 Lorenzo Washington (6-4, 265, Freshman)
Left Tackle	Nose Tackle
72 Chris Capps (6-6, 296, Junior) 71 Andre Smith (6-5, 333, Freshman) 78 Mike Johnson (6-6, 285, Freshman) 75 Cody Davis (6-7, 279, Sophomore) 62 Alex Stadler (6-6, 300, Freshman)	96 Dominic Lee (6-2, 303, Senior) 67 J.P. Adams (6-3, 288, Senior) 98 Brandon Fanney (6-5, 270, Freshman) 77 Byron Walton (6-4, 298, Freshman)
Left Guard	Right End
76 Marlon Davis (6-4, 315, Sophomore) 74 David Ross (6-4, 295, Freshman) 73 Justin Moon (6-5, 290, Junior) 66 Brian Motley (6-2, 274, Freshman)	94 Keith Saunders (6-3, 246, Junior) 93 Bobby Greenwood (6-6, 260, Sophomore) 84 Zeke Knight (6-3, 227, Junior) 90 Milton Talbert (6-3, 240, Freshman)
Center	Weakside Linebacker
59 Antoine Caldwell (6-3, 296, Sophomore) 70 Evan Cardwell (6-3, 290, Freshman)	42 Juwan Simpson (6-3, 222, Senior) 44 Demarcus Waldrop (5-11, 190, Junior) 6 Marcel Stamps (6-3, 215, Junior)
Right Guard	Middle Linebacker
50 Justin Britt (6-4, 294, Sophomore) 71 Scott Deaton (6-5, 295, Freshman)	56 Matt Collins (6-1, 241, Junior) 21 Prince Hall (6-0, 240, Freshman) 57 Darren Mustin (6-2, 246, Junior) 35 Charlie Kirschman (6-3, 255, Freshman) 53 Ken Vandervoort (6-3, 216, Junior)
Right Tackle	Strongside Linebacker
58 Kyle Tatum (6-8, 290, Senior) 61 B.J. Stabler (6-4, 295, Sophomore) 74 Trent Davidson (6-5, 270, Sophomore) 68 Taylor Pharr (6-6, 290, Freshman) 79 Drew Davis (6-6, 290, Freshman)	55 Terrence Jones (6-2, 223, Senior) 46 Zach Schreiber (6-2, 240, Freshman) 51 Eryk Anders (6-2, 220, Freshman) 32 Charlie Higgenbotham (6-1, 210, Freshman)
Tight End	Left Cornerback
83 Travis McCall (6-2, 250, Sophomore) 88 Nick Walker (6-5, 245, Sophomore) 89 Charles Hoke (6-6, 240, Sophomore) 85 Preston Dial (6-4, 242, Freshman) 87 Cole Harvey (6-3, 250, Freshman)	1 Ramzee Robinson (5-10, 190, Senior) 16 Lionel Mitchell (6-2, 180, Sophomore) 17 Chris Rogers (6-1, 178, Freshman) 20 Tremayne Coger (5-11, 180, Freshman)
Quarterback	Right Cornerback
14 John Parker Wilson (6-2, 215, Sophomore) 15 Jimmy Barnes (6-5, 229, Freshman) 18 Marc Guillou (6-3, 212, Senior) 17 Greg McElroy (6-2, 210, Freshman)	2 Simeon Castille (6-1, 188, Junior) 36 Eric Gray (5-11, 188, Junior) 24 Marquis Johnson (6-0, 180, Freshman)
Halfback	Strong Safety
34 Kenneth Darby (5-11, 220, Senior) 10 Jimmy Johns (6-3, 240, Sophomore) 27 Roy Upchurch (6-0, 193, Freshman) 38 Glen Coffee (6-1, 207, Sophomore) 29 Ali Sharrief (5-9, 208, Freshman) 9 Terry Grant (5-10, 188, Freshman)	3 Jeffrey Dukes (6-2, 205, Senior) 49 Rashad Johnson (5-11, 178, Sophomore) 13 Cory Reamer (6-3, 198, Sophomore) 48 Travis Sikes (6-4, 195, Freshman) 41 Andy Davis (6-0, 205, Freshman)
Fullback	Safety
33 LeRon McClain (6-1, 256, Senior) 19 Tim Castille (5-11, 236, Senior) 40 Baron Huber (6-4, 240, Freshman) 35 Patrick Hanrahan (6-0, 245, Freshman) 91 Will Denniston (6-3, 221, Junior)	20 Marcus Carter (6-1, 200, Junior) 30 Bryan Kilpatrick (6-4, 197, Senior) 43 Sam Burnthall (6-3, 195, Freshman) 27 Justin Woodall (6-1, 200, Freshman)
Placekicker	Punter
86 Jamie Christensen (6-0, 178, Junior) 15 Andrew Friedman (6-2, 215, Freshman) Leigh Tiffin (5-10, 168, Freshman)	11 P.J. Fitzgerald (6-0, 190, Freshman) 23 Justin Martin (5-10, 205, Freshman) 35 Patrick Eades (6-2, 185, Junior) Adam Hall (6-1, 200, Freshman)
Snapper	
66 Luke Spaulding (6-0, 213, Junior) 69 Brian Selman (6-0, 195, Freshman)	

FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Alabama prep big men targeted by Tide

Golden Boy quarterbacks, whippet-like receivers, slashing runners, acrobatic defensive backs. All good to have on a football team, but not enough. It takes the big men to have a competitive team. Linemen and tight ends on offense, linemen and linebackers on defense.

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Couple the need of big men with the importance of recruiting well among those who

know you best—the in-state players—and it is natural to begin our “recruiting season” each year with a look at the big men from Alabama.

Here are those the recruiting experts have identified as on the Alabama recruiting radar screen. It is likely that some of these will not be recruited by Alabama and will sign elsewhere on the first Wednesday in February, 2007. It is also possible that some not yet identified will work their way up the ladder to football prospect and be recruited by the Crimson Tide.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Last year the clear strength of the prospect list in the state of Alabama was the offensive linemen category, and the Crimson Tide cleaned up in that area. But at this time last year the big prizes were still on the board. Only later—much later in some cases—would Bama land the likes of Andre Smith and David Ross, part of the nation’s best effort in signing offensive linemen, a total of six highly-regarded up-front men.

In part for that reason, offensive linemen may not be the priority in 2007 that it was last year in Alabama football recruiting. Indeed, a couple of top in-state linemen have already opted for Crimson Tide grayshirt status in the upcoming signing class.

(A grayshirt is the unofficial designation of those who are willing to delay university entry for a semester in order to allow the school to sign additional players. A school may sign as many as it wishes, but only 25 new football signees may enter college on scholarship the next fall, and the total on scholarship cannot exceed 85.)

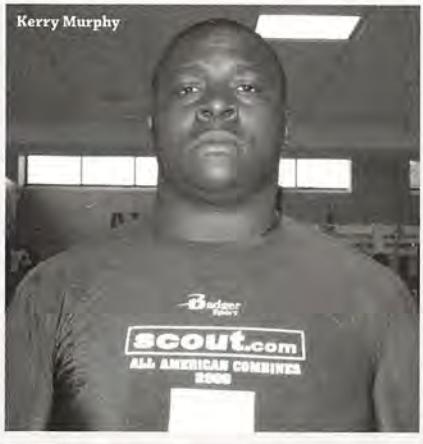
William Vlachos, (6-2, 300 pounds) from Mountain Brook High School, was the first upcoming senior offensive line prospect to accept a grayshirt offer from Alabama delaying his enrollment until 2008. Vlachos chose the Tide over scholarship offers from LSU and West Virginia.

“I felt real comfortable with the coaching staff,” Vlachos said. “We all felt like it was the best decision for me. I am finished with my recruitment. I am committed to Alabama.”

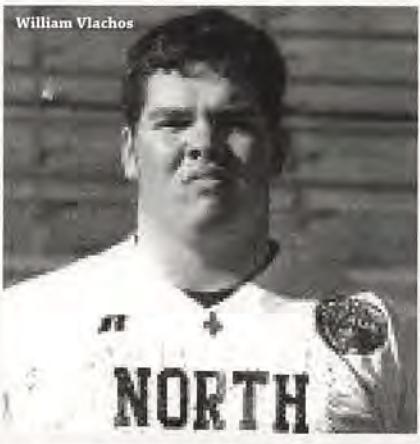
Hoover’s Patrick Crump (6-3, 280) was the second player to accept the grayshirt offer from the Tide over scholarship offers from several schools including elite programs Michigan and Tennessee.

“I felt like the greyshirt was the best situation for me,” Crump said. “I am only 16 years old, and it will give me a chance to get bigger and stronger. I am thrilled about this opportunity. I knew from Day One I wanted to go to Alabama. It’s the place I always wanted to play. I am finished with my recruitment. I will not take any more visits.”

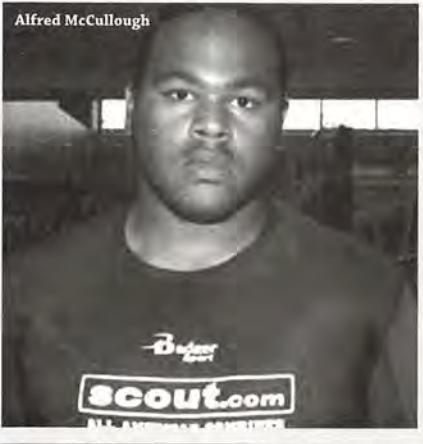
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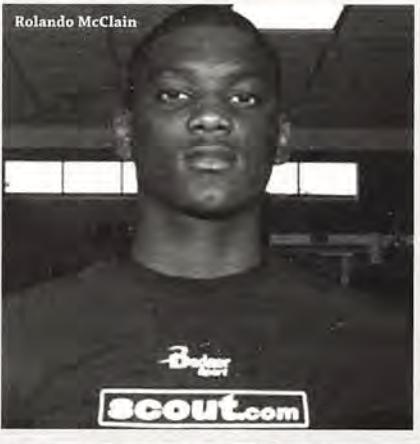
William Vlachos



Alfred McCullough



Rolando McClain



Most recruiting services list Crump's Hoover teammate, Ryan Pugh (6-3, 275), as the top offensive line prospect in the state. Although Bama would likely have been very interested in Pugh, he had an Auburn connection and committed to the Tigers early.

A couple of offensive linemen who bear watching in their senior seasons are Henry Porter (6-2, 300) from Opelika and Jared Cooper (6-4, 285) from W.S. Neal in Brewton. Alabama will also be able to keep a close eye on Keiandre Jones (6-3, 360) from Tuscaloosa Hillcrest. And most would consider a couple of names intriguing, reminiscent of Alabama football history: Rakim Billingsley of Sylacauga and Antonio Jelks of Gadsden.

TIGHT END

It is unusual that tight end may not be a very high priority for Alabama in this recruiting class. Unusual for two reasons: One, Alabama Head Coach Mike Shula likes to sign tight ends because he wants to use a lot of tight ends in the offense and because tight ends are big, athletic men who can possibly end up at other positions, such as Mark Anderson becoming a top NFL draft choice as a defensive end or current Tide Trent Davidson finding a home at offensive tackle. Two, Alabama has had some high-profile "losses" in recruiting tight ends in recent years.

That said, a look at Alabama's tight end depth chart shows a number of young, talented performers, which reduces the priority of recruiting the position this year. Additionally, it is not a year when there are a large number of outstanding senior prep tight ends in Alabama.

Almost everyone agrees that the top tight end prospect in Alabama is Nick Fairley, 6-4, 255, of Mobile Williamson. And his stock went up when he was MVP of the Scout.com Combine in Tuscaloosa in early summer. Fairley is looking at scholarship offers from the likes of LSU, Auburn, West Virginia, and Kansas State, as well as the Crimson Tide.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Anyone examining Alabama's recruiting needs would include the defensive line. Indeed, under normal circumstances, every football team would like to sign a handful of defensive tackles every year. It seems a good team can't have too many.

The position is notable this year among Alabama prospects in part because Bama has already secured a commitment from one of the state's best in Alfred McCullough, and in part because almost everyone lists one of the top prospects in Alabama this year as defensive tackle Kerry Murphy.

In July, Alfred McCullough (6-3, 297) from Athens announced for the Crimson Tide. "Alabama is close to home, offers a chance to play early, and it felt like the right place for me," McCullough said.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall

of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did not become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE-GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE



GENE STALLINGS

AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

KIRK MCNAIR

"Another reason I like Alabama is because of all the new facilities that are going to be in place. And Alabama has the best situation for the athletes regarding their academics."

Most consider the top defensive tackle prospect in the state to be Scout.com five-star recruit Kerry Murphy (6-5, 324) of Hoover. Alabama has been the leader for his services from Day One, although he has shown some interest in Auburn and in the Florida schools, including Miami.

"My favorite is Alabama of course," Murphy said. "Everyone in my family is an Alabama fan. I have grown up liking Alabama."

Although some list Nick Gentry (6-3, 270) as a defensive end prospect, most consider him to be a tackle in college. Recruiting reports say Alabama coaches are impressed by his intensity. He also comes from an Alabama powerhouse football program—Prattville—that has been something of a feeder school for Crimson Tide football the past few years. Last year he recorded 22 sacks.

Gentry has an impressive scholarship offer sheet including Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Notre Dame and Tennessee.

D.J. Looney (6-2, 280) of Oak Mountain in Birmingham has been a star on the offensive line, but is projected as a defensive lineman in college. He has expectation of seeing some defensive duty as a prep senior.

Hoover defensive lineman Josh Chapman (6-1, 280-pounds) is tough, aggressive and knows the way to the football. Chapman was the defensive MVP at the Scout.com All-American combine in Tuscaloosa in April. He holds scholarship offers from Auburn and Ole Miss with a greyshirt offer from Alabama.

"They are coming off probation, and they had a great season last year," Chapman said about Alabama. "I think they are going back to where they used to be. When I found out more about the greyshirt deal, I really don't think it's a bad idea. It gives you a chance to grow, get faster and stronger."

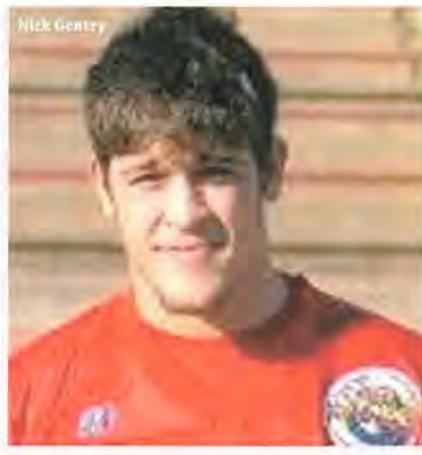
Other potential defensive tackle prospects in Alabama include Justin Sanders (6-5, 270) of Buckhorn in New Market.

DEFENSIVE END

Alabama has commitments from two defensive ends, both from outside Alabama (Kortnei Brown from North Carolina and Alex Watkins from Tennessee).

The top defensive end in the state of Alabama is also considered by many to be the top prospect in the state this year. And, unfortunately, Sidell Corley (6-4, 250) from McGill-Toolen in Mobile, has committed to Florida. Fortunately, though, the Scout.com four-star man has said that he is still considering Alabama, and he did give Bama a "perfect five" after his unofficial visit to The Capstone in the spring. Alabama continues to recruit the outstanding defender and he will make an official visit to The University. He has said he will also visit Auburn and FSU.

"I have been staying in contact on a regular basis with Coach [Joe] Kines and Coach [David]



Turner from Alabama," Corley said. "They still treat me like I am not committed."

Also listed among the top prospects in the state at defensive end is Jamison Wadley (6-4, 240) of Attalla Etowah.

LINEBACKER

The greatest emphasis of Alabama's 2007 recruiting effort is likely to be at linebacker.

Alabama hit a home run with the verbal commitment of the state's top linebacker, Scout.com four-star Rolando McClain (6-4, 235) from Decatur.

"The main reason I am going to Alabama is because I am expecting to play and be a big-time player," McClain said. "I like being in the spotlight. At Alabama I feel like they are going to need linebackers, and I am going to do whatever I can do to be the best linebacker on the team. More than likely I won't take any other visits. I know I am going to Alabama for sure."

It may be the top sleeper prospect in the state is linebacker Jeffrey Daniels (6-1, 230) of Brantley. He lists Alabama among his favorites.

Jonathan Beasley (6-2, 209) of Montgomery Jeff Davis had an early offer from Southern Miss, but could end up with a Southeastern Conference offer. He lists his overall favorite as Alabama.



Though some might expect to see Herschel Houston (5-11, 233) of Cherokee County in Centre listed with the running backs, the nephew of former Bama star Martin Houston is considered a top linebacker prospect.

Albert Rocker (6-1, 200) of Sparkman in New Market is also drawing some interest.

Linebacker is a position where suspects can develop into prospects in a senior season and this list is likely to expand in the upcoming months. ■

HOT LIST

2007 Alabama Football Commitments

It's a long time until the first Wednesday of February, 2007, when next year's football recruiting class will put names on the dotted lines of scholarship papers. All schools are allowed to sign 25 new players each year. However, the overall squad limit of scholarship players is 85, so a school with a small senior class—such as Alabama this year—may not sign a full 25. Recruiting observers think Bama will add about 18 new signees. Here are those who had committed to Alabama by mid-summer.

Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Kortnei Brown	DE	6-5	210	4.6	Charlotte, N.C. (Victory Christian)
Patrick Crump	OL	6-3	280	N/A	Birmingham (Hoover)
Jennings Hester	LB	6-3	215	4.7	Atlanta (Marist)
Chris Lett	S	6-1	210	4.6	Pensacola, Fla. (Pensacola)
Robert Marve	QB	6-2	190	4.7	Tampa, Fla. (Plant)
Rolando McClain	LB	6-4	230	4.68	Decatur
Alfred McCullough	DT	6-3	297	5.1	Athens
Jermaine McKenzide	WR	6-2	165	4.53	Bradenton, Fla. (Bradenton Acad.)
Sherod Murdock	CB	6-0	175	4.5	Tampa, Fla. (Middleton)
Jamar Taylor	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Lakeland, Fla. (Lakeland)
William Vlachos	OL	6-2	300	5.1	Mountain Brook
Alex Watkins	DE	6-4	225	4.6	Brownsville, Tenn. (Haywood)
LaMarcus Williams	DT	6-1	285	5.0	Bastrop, La. (Bastrop)

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SPRING SINEES

Men's and women's basketball add players

There's reasonable interest in the early signing period in November, at least for men's basketball. Since the NCAA added the opportunity for athletes in winter and spring sports to sign prior to the start of their senior winter and spring seasons, more and more take advantage of the opportunity.

Of course, the big stir among recruiting followers in this part of the country is in January, preparatory to football signing day on the first Wednesday in February.

With most of the work done before the late signing period beginning in mid-April, there is less publicity on those signees, and seemingly less interest among those who follow college athletics.

But the late signing period can be very important to college teams.

Alabama added a number of performers in various sports this April. They include two new members of the men's basketball team of Coach Mark Gottfried.

Demetrius Jemison, a 6-foot-7, 225-pound forward, helped lead Huffman High School in Birmingham to the 2006 Alabama 6A championship game.

"I'm very excited," said Gottfried. "I think Demetrius is going to be a very good player here at The University of Alabama. He's a powerful player who is going to bring a level of toughness to our team. He's coming from a winning program at Huffman where winning is important. I believe he's going to fill a need for us as a player who can fill a number of positions for us around the basket and around the perimeter."

Jemison averaged 13.8 points, 6.9 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 2.0 blocks per game last season. As a junior, he averaged 17.9 points. He scored more than 2,000

points and grabbed more than 1,000 rebounds during his high school career. He was a four-year starter. Jemison was all-state and all-state tournament and as a junior was MVP in Birmingham.

Mykal Riley, a 6-foot-6, 185-pound forward from Panola (Texas) Junior College, is a native of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He averaged 18.4 points last season at Panola. His sophomore season stats also included making 93 three-point shots in Panola's 22 games, an average of 4.2 per game. He averaged 4.4 steals per game and was an All Region XIV second team.

Riley played in the Region XIV All-Star game in the National Junior College Athletic Association All-Star Classic. It was an event that included 12 All-Americans.

"We're excited about Mykal signing with our team," said Gottfried. "He's an extremely good shooter with great range, and he led the nation in steals as well. For us to add a player of his caliber at this point in the spring is fortunate."

Jemison and Riley join previous signees 6-3 guard Verice Cloyd (see Page 15) of Genesis One in Mendenhall, Mississippi; 6-8 forward Avery Jukes of South Gwinnett in Snellville, Georgia; 6-4 point guard Mikhail Torrance of Mary Montgomery of Semmes; and 6-2 guard Justin Tubbs of Hewitt-Trussville.

Alabama Women's Basketball Coach Stephany Smith added two high school stars from Mississippi and a junior college player.

Bama signed the Mississippi Gatorade Player of the Year, Deadrea Magee, a 5-9 guard from Picayune Memorial High School.

"Deadrea is an outstanding player," Smith said, "and she will certainly compliment the six others we signed during the early signing period. Deadrea

can play either the one, two or three spot and will be tremendous asset to our team."

Magee helped the Lady Tide to a 25-3 record and the South 4A state playoffs, averaging 25.3 points, 8.0 rebounds, 5.0 assists and 5.0 steals per game. She finished her career with 2,126 points as the school's all-time leading scorer. Dedrea scored a career-high 40 points against Bay High in a game that she recorded a triple double (40 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds). She played for Coach Dennis Peterson at Picayune.

Tateshia Page, a 6-4 post player from Tupelo, led her Lanier High team to state semi-finals appearances in each of the last two seasons.

"Tateshia is a player with tremendous athleticism who can block shots, run the floor well and score around the basket," Smith said. "She is a great communicator who will be a good addition to our class. Though we have signed several players this year, we were still one post player shy. She could be the missing piece to our roster."

While starring for Lanier, Page shared the team's MVP award and was Lanier's defensive MVP. She was selected to compete in the Mississippi/Alabama All-Star game earlier this spring after earning All-Region and All-Metro second team honors in her senior season.

Playing for Coach Jonas James, Page helped the Lady Bulldogs to a 24-9 mark. She tallied 10 double-doubles during the season while averaging 12.2 points and 15.2 rebounds per game.

Forward Nathalie Reshard comes to Alabama after success at two junior colleges, both with ties to the Crimson Tide women's basketball program.

"Nathalie is a tremendous athlete who has great character," Smith said. "She has great leadership abilities and demonstrated to me that

Cloyd Admitted

she is capable of leading and communicating with her teammates. Nathalie is a very positive person and will be a great addition to our team."

In 2004-05, Reshard played for Seminole Community College in Sanford, Florida, under current Alabama Assistant Coach Lisa Nuxol. Reshard helped the Lady Raiders to a runner-up finish in the Mid-Florida Conference in her freshman season.

Last year, Reshard deepened her ties to the Tide program by playing under former Alabama star and assistant coach Brittney Ezell, who is now the head coach at Okaloosa-Walton College in Niceville, Florida. Playing under Ezell, Reshard scored 7.1 points per game and grabbed 4.0 rebounds per outing while helping the Raiders to a 20-9 campaign. She was graduated with a 3.2 grade point average.

The 6-0 post player starred at Niceville High School under Coach Fred Hurlbert. Reshard was the team's offensive player of the year in 2002 and 2004 and earned the sportsmanship award in 2004. She was successful in the classroom as a prep as well, earning Niceville's Athletics/Academic award in 2004.

Reshard was also an accomplished star on the track & field team at Niceville, competing in the 400 and 800 meter events. She competed in the Florida state high school track & field championships in 2003 and 2004 in both the 400-meter dash and the 4x800 meter relay.

Smith announced that two players from last year's squad will transfer to other schools. Chanel Johnson, a forward/center from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Crystal Bellinger, a guard from New York, have left the Tide program.

In other sports:

Men's Track and Field Coach Harvey Glance added four new performers. They are:

Jake Winder, the 2005 Illinois state champion in the pole vault, who has a career best of 16-7; Michael Hughes of Atlanta, a pole vaulter (15-2) and decathlete from Atlanta who will attend The University on a Presidential Scholarship; state high jump champion Tyler Boswell (6-10) of Hoover; and middle distance runner G.J. Hudgens of Nashville, state champion in the 800 and runner-up in the 400.

Alabama Men's Tennis Coach Billy Pate signed one of the top ten junior players in India in Saketh Myneni. In the past year, the 6-4 Myneni has won six tournaments, including the prestigious Adidas

MCC National Junior Singles Championships. He also advanced to the semifinals in doubles of the same event and won doubles titles at two AITA Super Series events.

First-year Alabama Women's Golf Coach Mic Potter added two foreign players. Rhea Nair and Helena Blomberg have become the second and third players signed by Potter to the Capstone, joining Kelley Vandenburg, who signed with Alabama earlier this year.

Nair, who was born in Bombay, India and lists her hometown as Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, has been in the United States the past four years. Nair has attended two golf schools, starring for the International Junior Golf Academy in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and most recently for the IMG Ledbetter Golf Academy in Bradenton, Florida.

Nair won two medals and tallied several top-five finishes in her prep career.

Blomberg, of Uppsala, Sweden, becomes the second Swedish player to join the Tide in the past four years. Carina Sorensen, a senior on this year's squad, also hails from Sweden.

Blomberg has won Swedish School National titles the past two seasons while starring for Coach Per Westerholm at Bildningcentrum Facetten High School. She was also active on the Swedish club scene, competing for Coach Jonnie Eriksson in Uppsala. Her team won titles in the Junior and Senior National competition.

While competing on her club team, Blomberg won the Ben Hogan Cup in 2004 and 2005 and the Bankboeken Tour Riks match play tournament in 2003. She tallied several other top-five finishes and represented her region on the Regional Golf team for four straight years.

It is possible there will be other late signees. That is particularly possible in baseball, where Coach Jim Wells has to be concerned about signees who have been drafted to play professionally.

There was some good news on that front this summer when it was learned that left-handed pitcher Del Howell intended to pick Bama over an offer from the New York Yankees.

Howell, from American Christian Academy in Tuscaloosa, made news earlier this year when he pitched back-to-back perfect games. He also had the winning hit as his team won the state championship.

Alabama basketball signee Verice Cloyd must have had an uncomfortable summer. By the luck of the draw, he became the real live human example of NCAA bluster. After national abuses were disclosed by newspaper reporters, the NCAA jumped into the fray and did pretty much nothing except discredit some mostly dispicable diploma mills.

In the sweep, the innocent were pushed into the trash heap. Among those which turned out to be innocent was Genesis One, a prep school in Mendenhall, Mississippi. One of the stars of that team was Verice Cloyd of Nashville, Tennessee, a two-year student and basketball player. He was also an Alabama signee.

Cloyd seemed to be getting it from both sides in the early part of the summer. He had to wait out the NCAA investigation. Then when Genesis One was not included on the diploma mill list and its graduates cleared to apply to play for NCAA institutions, Cloyd had another wait.

The University of Alabama took a long, hard look at Cloyd's application since Genesis One is not accredited as a normal high school. But on the first day of the second semester of summer school, July 11, Cloyd was given the green light and enrolled for classes.

Cloyd had found it necessary to retain an attorney as he fought his way through Alabama's schoolhouse door.

Cloyd still must make it through the NCAA Clearinghouse, but there are assurances his grade point average, core courses, and standardized test score are in order. He joined other Alabama signees on scholarship, which is permitted under NCAA rules while his application at the clearinghouse is processed.

Some of Cloyd's teammates have reportedly been admitted to their colleges—Michael Washington to Arkansas and Gary Flowers to Oklahoma State. One concern in Bama's basketball office had been that if Cloyd was not admitted by The University, the Crimson Tide would be playing against Cloyd at a school such as Tennessee or Mississippi State.

Although one University spokesman had said that Alabama "does not knowingly accept students from non-accredited institutions," that was an error. Alabama has taken students from specialized schools (including some athletes) and Bama accepts home-schooled students.

—Kirk McNair

CHANGE Is Good

New hands on deck in Alabama athletics

Historically, there is frequent movement in the college coaching fraternity regardless of sport. The greatest notice is taken when there is a change at the top of the highest profile sport—the head football coach. Fortunately for Alabama, that change is not on the horizon. Indeed, Crimson Tide Head Football Coach Mike Shula signed a new contract following the 2005 season.

Moreover, there were no changes in Alabama head coaching positions in the past year, though there were scares in baseball and softball (see Page 32).

But there are a number of new faces in other coaching positions and in some administrative areas in the Bama athletics department this year.

Second only to football in fan interest is men's basketball, and there was an unexpected change in Coach Mark Gottfried's staff. After the somewhat surprising hire of former Auburn Assistant Coach Eugene Harris last year, it was equally surprising that the affable Harris was replaced this summer.

James Holland, who won an NAIA national championship as a player at South Carolina-Spartanburg and has won championships in three different conferences as a coach, was added to Gottfried's staff.

Holland, who played for the Harlem Globetrotters from 1982-83, is returning to familiar territory in the Southeastern Conference. He has been an assistant coach at South Carolina, where his recruiting classes ranked among the top seven nationally during part of his 1991-93 tenure, and he helped Georgia to the SEC Eastern Division title in 2002.

Holland, 46, was an assistant coach at Texas-El Paso the past two seasons. During that



time, the Miners won 48 games, highlighted by its 27-8 record in 2005. UTEP produced three All-Western Athletic Conference players and won the WAC tournament.

Holland brings with him a complete coaching background, having worked as a recruiter, on the floor coach, and opponent scout. His player evaluation background includes having worked as a scout for the Washington Wizards. Holland is a 1985 graduate of South Carolina-Spartanburg where he was a three-time team captain and helped lead his team to the 1982 NAIA national championship. He was inducted into the school's athletics Hall of Fame earlier this year. He started his coaching career as an assistant at his alma mater (now named the University of South Carolina Upstate) from

1983-87, moving to Division 1 coaching at North Carolina-Ashville in 1987.

Gottfried also replaced his director of basketball operations, bringing in a familiar face for that role. Kobie Baker, a Tuscaloosa native who was an administrative assistant on Gottfried's staff in 2000-01, has returned to the Tide after two years at North Texas, where he was on the staff of former Bama assistant Johnny Jones.

The 31-year-old Baker is a 1998 graduate of Talladega College where he helped lead the Tornadoes to a conference championship in 1995, leading the Southern States Conference in free throw percentages and 3-point field goal percentages. He set Talladega College's school record in single game 3-point shots made. He started his coaching career as an assistant at Southeastern Louisiana in 1998-99.

He is a 1993 graduate of Tuscaloosa's Central High School.

Baker has also been an assistant coach at Troy State and recruiting coordinator and assistant coach at Nicholls State.

His duties at Alabama will include scheduling games, on campus recruiting, monitoring the academic progress of Alabama's basketball student-athletes, coordinator team travel, and serving as director of the Mark Gottfried Basketball Camp, among others.

He replaced Matt Parke, who stayed just one season in the position.

Alabama Women's Basketball Coach Stephany Smith has an assistant coach opening to fill after it was announced this summer that Saudia Roundtree would leave the staff.

Smith did announce a new graduate



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Doug Walker



University of Alabama

assistant with Ashley Earley joining the Tide after having starred at Vanderbilt. The Memphis native helped the Commodores to a 102-33 record and four NCAA Tournament appearances. She played professionally in Israel last year. Earley joins her former teammate, Ashley McElhiney, at Bama. McElhiney is director of operations for women's basketball.

Jill Pape-Kramer is a new assistant coach for Judy Green's volleyball team. She replaces Erich Hinterstocker who became head coach at North Dakota State.

Kramer comes to Alabama after three seasons as an assistant coach at Texas at San Antonio. She helped the Roadrunners advance to the Southland Conference tournament each season she was with them, advancing to the championship match this season.

Green considers it "a real plus" that Kramer was a coach for USA Volleyball this summer, serving as coach of an A2 team.

Kramer was at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio as a graduate

assistant in 2002. Kramer began her coaching career in 1998 as an assistant for the 16 national team of the Texas Advantage Volleyball Club that competed in the Junior Olympic National Championships. In 2003, she joined the Alamo Volleyball Club staff and coached the 17 Kaepa team to a third-place Club National Division finish. She also led the 2005 Alamo 17 Kaepa team to a fifth-place national finish. She served as assistant director to Laura Groff for the Alamo Volleyball Club while in San Antonio.

She was a four-year letterwinner and captain at TCU. She holds 10 Horned Frogs records, two WAC records, and one NCAA record.

There were also summer surprises in other areas of the athletics department. Rhoda Vaughn retired as ticket manager and Tide Pride Director Tommy Ford was elevated to a position in Crimson Tradition. Larry White, longtime media relations director, was also promoted to a Crimson Tradition post.

Doug Walker was selected for associate athletics director for media relations. To say

that he has a good football background is an understatement. He came to Alabama after a three-year stint at Notre Dame, where he served as the sports information director for football. Before joining Notre Dame's staff, Walker was the Miami football media contact for four years, including two years as the school's sports information director.

Walker served as assistant director of athletic media relations at TCU in 1998 and was promoted to associate director in 1999, working with men's basketball, and men's and women's track and field and cross country. He served as editor of Maroon & White Report, a Texas A&M fan publication, from 1995 until moving to TCU.

A 1989 graduate of Texas A&M with a bachelor of science degree in journalism, Walker spent 1989-90 as a graduate assistant in the Texas A&M sports information office, 1990-91 as a staff assistant with the Florida SID department, then served two years as assistant media relations director for the Southwest Conference through 1993. He spent two more years at Texas A&M from 1993 to 1995 as sports information special projects assistant and editor of the A&M hotline.

Among the international events he has worked are the 1994 Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway; the 1994 Paralympic Winter Games in Lillehammer; and the 1995 Pan-American Games in Mar del Plata, Argentina. He has worked a wide variety of track events, including the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Trials, the Southwest Conference and Big 12 Conference championships and the Texas Relays.

Athletics Director Mal Moore elected to combine the positions of ticket manager and director of Tide Pride and selected Chris Besanceney to be assistant athletics director for those tasks. He joined the Tide staff after serving nearly two years as assistant athletics director for ticketing at Tennessee.

Prior to his stint at Tennessee, Besanceney served as the head athletic ticket manager at Michigan State University from 2000-04, where he was responsible for all ticketing, including post-season ticketing and donor seating.

Prior to that, he served as assistant ticket manager at Michigan State and assistant ticket manager for the University of Missouri.

Besanceney earned his bachelor's degree in 1998 from Michigan State, where he served four years as a football manager under Coach George Perles.

FOOTBALL

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record
September 2	Hawaii	Tuscaloosa	Tied, 1-1
September 9	Vanderbilt	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 56-19-4
September 16	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa	First meeting
September 23	Arkansas	Fayetteville	UofA leads 10-6-0
September 30	Florida	Gainesville	UofA leads 20-12-0
October 7	Duke	Tuscaloosa	Tied, 1-1
October 14	Mississippi	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 42-9-2
October 21	Tennessee	Knoxville	UofA leads 44-37-7
October 28	Florida-International	Tuscaloosa	First meeting
November 4	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 72-15-3
November 11	LSU	Baton Rouge	UofA leads 43-21-5
November 18	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 38-31-1
December 2	SEC Championship	Atlanta (CBS)	UofA 2 wins, 3 losses

2006 ALABAMA FALL SCHEDULES

VOLLEYBALL

CRIMSON TIDE INVITATIONAL		
Aug. 26-27	Kansas, Miami, Alabama A&M	TBA
BAMA BASH		
Sept. 1-2	Ball State, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Mercer	TBA
NORTHERN IOWA INVITATIONAL		
Sept. 8-9	Northern Iowa, Notre Dame, Kansas State	TBA
Sept. 15	Mississippi State	7:00
Sept. 17	Ole Miss	1:30
Sept. 22	@ Auburn	7:00
Sept. 24	@ Florida	1:30
Sept. 29	@ Georgia	7:00
Oct. 1	@ South Carolina	1:30
Oct. 6	Arkansas	7:00
Oct. 8	LSU	1:30
Oct. 13	Kentucky	7:00
Oct. 15	Tennessee	1:30
Oct. 20	@ Ole Miss	7:00
Oct. 22	@ Mississippi State	1:30
Oct. 27	Auburn	6:00
Oct. 29	Florida	1:30
Nov. 3	@ Tennessee	7:00
Nov. 5	@ Kentucky	1:30
Nov. 10	@ LSU	7:00
Nov. 12	@ Arkansas	1:30
Nov. 17	South Carolina	7:00
Nov. 19	Georgia	1:30
Nov. 30-	NCAA First & Second Rounds	TBA
Dec. 3	@ TBA	
Dec. 7-	NCAA Regionals	TBA
Dec. 10	@ TBA	
Dec. 14	NCAA Semifinals	TBA
Dec. 16	NCAA Championship	@ Omaha, Neb.

SOCcer

Aug. 19	Samford (Scrimmage)	7:00
VANDERBILT INVITATIONAL		
Aug. 25	Denver	5:00
Aug. 27	Colorado	Noon
MEMPHIS INVITATIONAL		
Sept. 2	Memphis	7:00
Sept. 4	Arkansas State	TBA
UAB INVITATIONAL		
Sept. 8	Kansas	5:00
Sept. 10	UAB	2:00
Sept. 15	Mercer	7:00
Sept. 17	Birmingham Southern	1:00
Sept. 22	South Carolina	7:00
Sept. 24	Florida	1:00
Sept. 29	@ Vanderbilt	7:00
Oct. 1	@ Kentucky	2:00
Oct. 6	Mississippi State	7:00
Oct. 8	Ole Miss	1:00
Oct. 13	@ Arkansas	7:00
Oct. 15	@ LSU	2:00
Oct. 20	@ Tennessee	7:00
Oct. 22	Georgia	1:00
Oct. 27	@ Auburn	7:0-0
Nov. 3-6	SEC @ Orange Beach	TBA
Nov. 11-28	NCAA @ various sites	TBA

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 1	Belmont @ Nashville
Sept. 15	Crimson Classic
Sept. 30	Loyola Lakefront @ Chicago
Oct. 14	@ U-T-Chattanooga
Oct. 20	@ Mississippi State
Oct. 28	SEC Championships @ Baton Rouge
Nov. 11	NCAA Regionals @ Maryville, Tennessee
Nov. 20	NCAA Championships @ Terre Haute, Ind.

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 8	@ U-T-Chattanooga
Sept. 15	Crimson Classic
Sept. 30	@ Oregon Invitational
Oct. 14	Chile Pepper @ Fayetteville
Oct. 20	@ Mississippi State
Oct. 28	SEC Championships @ Baton Rouge
Nov. 11	NCAA Regionals @ Maryville, Tennessee
Nov. 20	NCAA Championships @ Terre Haute, Ind.



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VOLLEYBALL OUTLOOK

More experienced team expects continued success

A look at the pre-season schedule gives a hint of what Head Coach Judy Green expects of her 2006 Alabama volleyball team. A year ago Green felt the need to build confidence in a young team, and the pre-season schedule gave that squad an opportunity to pile up wins. This year's veteran team will have a more difficult pre-season road.

And part of the reason for that is that Southeastern Conference teams are going to have to be even better this year than last season. Green isn't saying that the SEC will necessarily put six teams in the NCAA Tournament again this year as was the case in 2005. But this year the SEC has gone to a double round robin format, every team meeting every other team twice, once at home, once on the road. There will be no SEC Tournament for the 11 league teams (Vanderbilt doesn't field a team).

One of those six teams making it into the NCAA Tournament last season was Alabama. It was the first appearance for the Crimson Tide in the national tournament.

"We got a taste of it last year and we should be hungry for it again this year," Green said. "We don't want to be a one-hit wonder."

Bama was a big hit last year. In addition to its first trip to the NCAA Tournament, the Tide had its first wins over ranked teams—LSU and Tennessee (the Vols were a Final Four team). Alabama was 23-11 overall and 9-7 in SEC matches.

Green said, "We have a good nucleus coming back." Six players with starting experience return for Alabama. Junior Bridget Fuentez, a 5-11 junior outside hitter, was second team All-SEC last year and is Bama's best all-around player.

Junior Crystal Hudson, 5-11, is back at middle blocker, where 6-3 senior Rachel Green also has starting experience. Senior Abbi Blackburn, 5-11, got a few starts at opposite hitter last year behind the graduated four-year starter Kelly Potter, and

Judy Green



University of Alabama

Blackburn is expected to move into that position this season. Green said Blackburn "probably has the highest volleyball IQ of anyone on our team, and we need that on the court."

Megan Hudson, a 5-9 junior, returns as starting setter, and is also capable of playing other roles, including defensive specialist. Junior Brigitte Slack, 5-11, is a two-year starting setter.

Alabama's offense has traditionally been a 5-1, but last year the Tide had some success mixing in the 6-2, and that can be expected again this year.

Perhaps the biggest hole to fill in 2006 is that of libero, held down the past two years by Jessica Yearout. "We've got to find a libero," said Coach Green. "We think we know after the spring and Europe that Amy Pauly (5-4 sophomore) will step in. She did a nice job and improved."

"Europe" refers to a special situation Green expects to be of great benefit to this Bama team. The squad was able to get nearly a month extra work this off-season because of a 10-day trip to Europe, where the team played five matches against teams from Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

"It was huge for us," Green said. "In the spring, I saw a lot of individual improvement in skills, but I didn't see the team improvement until our European trip. We were very fortunate to get that extra experience against good teams—some better than we'll see in the SEC. And it gave our team a chance to get closer since in those circumstances you have to rely on each other. That helped improve our team chemistry. Coach Moore (Athletics Director Mal Moore) gave us his blessing to be able to do it. He understood what a benefit it would be."

Depth this year will come from women who were freshmen last year or who are coming in as freshmen this year.

Returning Tide players are 5-9 outside hitter Christie McKee, 5-11 outside hitter Sarah Snider, 6-1 middle blocker Lindsey Buteyn, and 6-0 middle blocker Brooks Webster. Newcomers this fall will be 6-3 opposite hitter Elizabeth Salstrand, 6-0 middle blocker Calli Johnson, and 5-6 libero/defensive specialist Jennifer Weber.

Green said this year's Tide team has the athleticism to run an up-tempo offense if the team can develop the ability to pass consistently. "That's what we need to work on," she said.

She said the Tide needs to continue to be a good digging team, as it was last year, and "to be a better serving team than we were last year. We

want to be able to score points on the serve."

Green noted that in 2005 "we were very young and inexperienced. We got a lot of confidence from early season wins and that helped us win later, particularly on the road. But we had to get mentally ready for the conference schedule, playing Friday-Sunday. We did pretty well on Fridays, but there isn't much time for adjustments (for the next team) for the Sunday match.

"We want to be a good Sunday team. I'll have that expectation this year."

She said, "We're a year smarter. We're more seasoned. We have a better understanding of what it takes to get us to where we were in 2005."

The Tide coach said last year was rewarding in that "we had been teetering on the edge" of an NCAA invitation for several years. "We beat some good teams to make that happen. But we were disappointed in our first round loss. We want to be in the NCAA Tournament every year, and I think because of last year's experience this team will be more hungry."

That said, she wants the team to "play within ourselves. We want to improve in every practice and transfer that improvement to every match."

Green said that the SEC was very good

last year with six teams selected for the NCAA Tournament. Although the league may not get six more teams in this year, and even though the top teams—LSU and Tennessee—had heavy losses from good teams, Green thinks that overall the SEC will be better this season.

Green is getting her squad ready for tough challenges in a hurry. Alabama will open the season August 25-26 hosting national powers Kansas and Miami (as well as Alabama A&M) in a tournament. Later in the season Bama will go to Northern Iowa with Notre Dame and Kansas State. All four teams are volleyball "names."

The Tide coach said, "I hope I didn't over-schedule, but I think this team needed a strong non-conference schedule. And if we can pick up a few wins against strong teams early, that will help us later."

"One of the best things about our schedule is having 10 SEC home games," Green said. "And every weekend when we have a home football game we have home Friday and Sunday matches."

For the fourth consecutive year, Green had all 14 of her players in summer school at The University. "That shows a level of commitment," she said. "Now we'll see who has worked the hardest this summer." ■

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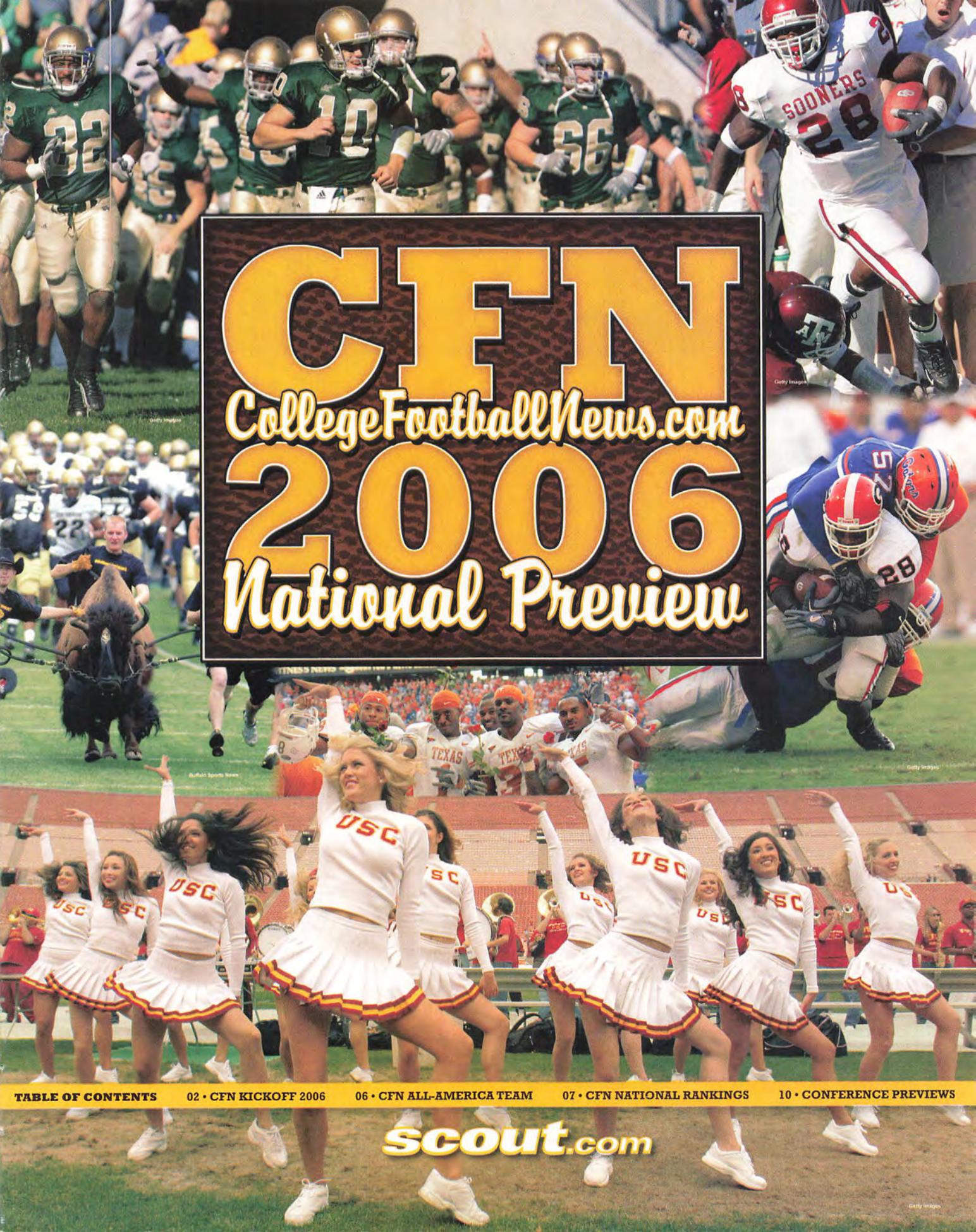
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scout.com

By Pete Fiutak

COLLEGE FOOTBALL NEWS '06 KICKOFF

How do you top THAT?

If 2005 wasn't the greatest year in college football history, it was a close second to just about any one you could come up with.

There was a great bowl season with four fantastic BCS games, topped off by a national title game that not only lived up to the unattainable hype, it blew past it. There was a resurgence of Notre Dame, Alabama and Penn State, and JoePa and Bobby Bowden squared off in a coaching matchup for the ages. There were all-time great players like Matt Leinart, Reggie Bush and Vince Young playing at a high level all season long. There was Texas-Ohio State and USC-Notre Dame, which each were among the better regular season games of all-time.

Come up with any scenario to beat last year. It can't be done because you can't come up with the wire-to-wire momentum started from the moment Leinart said he was coming back for his senior year. 2006 won't be 2005, but ...

The field is wide open

You name the halfway decent BCS league team and it probably has a realistic hope of catching lightning in a bottle and landing in the new BCS Championship Game (more on that later).

Texas has a ten-mile-wide hole to fill at quarterback, Notre Dame needs a defense, and Ohio State, USC, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, West Virginia and any other good team you can name has issues, which is a good thing if you're hoping for someone to come up with a 2003 LSU-like out-of-left-field run to a national title. In other words, there doesn't appear to be an absolute killer team, like USC was going into last year.

Get ready for a wild, madcap season with plenty of weeping and gnashing of teeth over the battle for the two spots in the newly created BCS Championship Game.

The new BCS changes

There are three big ones, and they're all positives if you're a fan of the non-BCS league teams, and if you're hoping beyond all reasonable



Best Game Ever?

Al Bellis/Getty

hope for a playoff before your time runs out. 1) Fox is taking over all BCS games other than the Rose Bowl, which ABC will hang on to until 2014. 2) Fox also gets the rights to the fifth BCS bowl game, which will be the national title game played in Arizona this year. The national title game will rotate among the four traditional sites with a second bowl added. For example, the 2010 Rose Bowl will be played like normal, and then there will be a second game for the national championship played later in Pasadena. This extra game isn't a playoff, but it does potentially make for an easy transition to being a playoff game after the bowls. But that's for way down the line.

3) Like before, the champions of the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 10 and SEC will get an automatic spot in the BCS. Starting this year, one champion from one of the other leagues (Conference USA, MAC, Mountain West, Sun Belt or WAC) will get an automatic spot if it's ranked among the top 12 teams in the final BCS standings or is ranked among the top 16 teams in the final BCS standings and ranked higher than the champion of one of the BCS conference champions. That means that TCU would've been in the BCS last year.

Which conference will be the best in 2006?

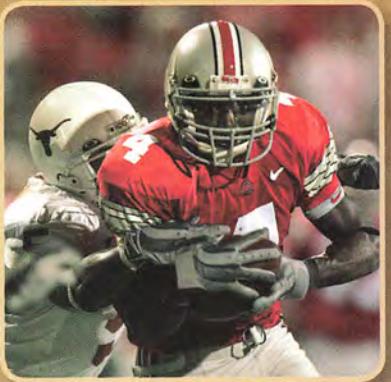
5. Big 12 — Texas and Oklahoma are loaded, but there's still too much mediocrity. Nebraska is coming off a huge bowl win against Michigan, and Missouri had a nice victory over South Carolina, but is the North really any better? Oklahoma State and Texas A&M should be more competitive. *The best team should be ... Texas*

4. Big Ten — The conference should take a step back this year. Ohio State has reloaded in the defensive back seven, Iowa has a nice team with the sleeper schedule to go on a big run, and Michigan should be better, but Penn State isn't going to be the same without Michael Robinson, Minnesota will take a big step back, and Wisconsin will overachieve before getting blasted by a good team. *The best team should be ... Ohio State*

3. ACC — The ACC was the best from top to bottom over the last few years, but not anymore. Is Miami ready to bounce back, or is it having problems playing in a good conference? Florida State looked great this spring, but is this going to be the year the ship completely turns back around? The rest of the league (cough, Virginia Tech, cough) is way too flaky. While Boston College, Clemson, Maryland, NC State, Georgia Tech, North Carolina and Virginia are all good, are any of them great? Clemson and Georgia Tech might be. *The best team should be ... Florida State*

2. Pac 10 — It's far better than you think. USC might not be the juggernaut of the past few years, but it's not going to fall far. Cal should be incredible, Arizona State's offense will be unstoppable, Washington State should be one of the year's surprise teams, and Oregon and Oregon State should be bowling. Arizona, Washington and Stanford will all be better. *The best team should be ... USC*

1. SEC — Vanderbilt showed last year that it can be competitive, and Mississippi State should have a killer defense. Ole Miss will be better in Ed Orgeron's second year, and Kentucky will be decent, even if the record doesn't show it.



Ultimate Weekly Schedule

Sept. 4

Florida State at Miami

The first games start on August 31st, but this possible ACC title showdown officially gets things rolling.

Sept. 9

Ohio State at Texas

The winner likely will be ranked No. 1 and have the inside track on the BCS Championship game. (*also playing: Penn State at Notre Dame*)

Sept. 16

LSU at Auburn

Easily the best weekend of the year with Michigan at Notre Dame, Nebraska at USC, Florida at Tennessee, Miami at Louisville and Oklahoma at Oregon.

Sept. 23

Penn State at Ohio State

This should be a great rematch of the hardest-hitting game of 2005. (*also playing: Colorado at Georgia*)

Sept. 30

Ohio State at Iowa

The last time these two played in Iowa City, Ohio State lost 33-7.

Oct. 7

Oklahoma vs. Texas

Was last year a one-shot deal or can Mack Brown keep Texas one step ahead of the Sooners? (*also playing: TCU at Utah (Oct. 5), LSU at Florida*)

Oct. 14

Florida at Auburn

This likely SEC title preview could also have major national title implications. (*also playing: Michigan at Penn State, Arizona State at USC*)

Oct. 21

Texas at Nebraska

If Texas beats Oklahoma, this likely will be the Big 12 Championship preview.

Oct. 28

Florida vs. Georgia

The World's Largest Outdoor Gathering That's Not Supposed to be a Cocktail Party.

Nov. 4

West Virginia at Louisville (Thur. Nov. 2)

If Louisville beats Miami and West Virginia beats Maryland, this might be for a spot in the national title game. (*also playing: Virginia Tech at Miami*)

Nov. 11

Oregon at USC

If Oregon really wants to be a Pac-10 player, this is the game it needs to have. (*also playing: Georgia at Auburn*)

Nov. 18

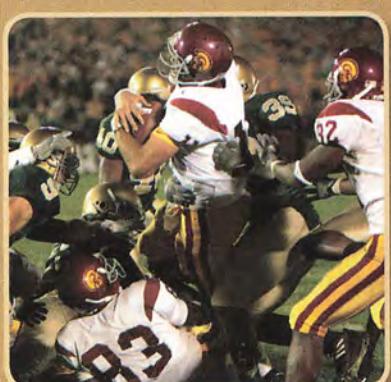
Michigan at Ohio State

Take your pick of the big games on Rivalry Weekend. Obviously the Michigan-OSU battle is always big, but California at USC and Auburn at Alabama could be just as important.

Nov. 25

Notre Dame at USC

If by some miracle both teams are unbeaten, this might be the most hyped regular season game ever. (*also playing: Florida at Florida State*)



Everyone else is really, really good. Even though Georgia should take a step back, the league is amazing with Florida, LSU and Auburn as national title contenders and Alabama, Arkansas and South Carolina good enough to beat anyone in the league. Tennessee should come up with the year's biggest turnaround. *The best team should be ... Auburn*

What are the biggest overall changes to the game this year?

Uniform instant replay and a 12-game schedule. All the extra game means is a Cupcake U. or two sprinkled throughout the schedules. The smart big-time teams are using the extra revenue lamb-for-the-slaughter home game to start the year with a tune-up for the important battles ahead. Some are using it as a breather late in the year. On the plus side, the 12-game slate means all the Pac-10 teams play each other, so there'll be a true conference champion, unlike the unfair Big Ten where teams like Purdue don't play Ohio State or Michigan, and without the gimmicky championship money-grubbing games like several other leagues have.

Instant replay will generate the biggest buzz throughout 2006. Outside of the pathologically grouchy who enjoy missed calls and controversy, no one can fault the college version of instant replay when compared to the bizarre and unfair pro version.

Here's the poop. Instant replay will be like normal with a man in a replay booth looking at every play. He'll signal down to the referee when a play should be reviewed upstairs, and everything will function like before. The problem last year was when it took too long for the process to occur and a play couldn't get reviewed in time. That meant coaches had to occasionally burn a timeout just to buy more time, and that, everyone could agree, wasn't fair. To change it, the NCAA has allowed coaches one challenge per game by calling a timeout. If the play isn't overturned, then the team loses a timeout and there aren't any more challenges. Fine.

Here's where it gets tricky. If a play is challenged and gets overturned, the team doesn't lose a timeout and doesn't lose its challenge. Let it ride. Theoretically, a coach can challenge 743 times a game as long as he's always right; however, he can't challenge if he doesn't have any timeouts left. Technically, that's fine since bad calls should get overturned. Now for the real kicker; the coaches will be flying blind. There won't be monitors in the coaches' booth, so unlike the NFL when an assistant upstairs yells at the head coach to challenge a call, a head coach will have to hope that he's right. Expect this to get very, very interesting as the season goes on.

And finally, a rule change that will fly under the radar but will make a big impact involves the kicking game. The height of the kicking tee has been reduced to one inch meaning more big returns and better overall field position for the



Brian Brohm

Andy Lyons/Getty

return teams. Expect this to play a really big role late in games when a team needs to go on a final scoring drive.

Everyone will be complaining about...

The BCS. Again. With the new 12-game schedule, and with some playing 13 games thanks to conference championships, it'll be harder and harder for teams to stay healthy through the long season and there are bound to be more slip-ups. No one appears to have a dominant team going into the season, and no one has a sure-thing schedule that assures 12-0. Of course, someone could go unbeaten, but who?

We all got a nice break in 2005 with the cut-and-dried Texas vs. USC national title, but the odds are solid that we'll all have to waste our time comparing apples to oranges, SEC to Pac-10, Big 12 to Big Ten, and/or some other configuration of things before some deserving team is out of the national title game. We're also overdue for a mega-blowup with five deserving one-loss teams jockeying for a spot in the national title game.

Also, get ready for a year of ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and SEC fans banding together to complain about the Big East. West Virginia achieved a major measure of respect with the Sugar Bowl win over Georgia, but there's still a general feeling by SEC fans that the Bulldogs simply took the game too lightly and that the Mountaineers would have never survived an SEC schedule. Just wait until this year.

West Virginia has a three-game season, hosting Maryland before road games later on against Louisville and Pitt. Louisville has a very respectable home game against Miami and a trip to Kansas State, along with a road date with Pitt and the showdown with West Virginia. What

happens if Louisville or West Virginia goes 12-0 and, for example, Texas, Ohio State, USC, Florida State and Florida all have one loss? We're talking a hypothetical situation here, but be prepared for a knockdown-dragout conference debate.

Which teams could shake up their conferences?

ACC — North Carolina

If the quarterback situation stabilizes early on and there's a home upset or two over Virginia Tech and Georgia Tech, John Bunting's crew has the talent to be a thorn in the side of the Coastal Division powers.

Big East — Connecticut

Call 2005 a transition season, with an injury to starting QB Matt Bonislawski and preseason problems with the defense keeping the Huskies from getting back to a bowl. That'll change this year, as they could ruin West Virginia's dream season in Storrs on October 20th in a nationally televised game.

Big Ten — Purdue

All together now ... there's no Ohio State or Michigan on the schedule. Again. The Big Ten road games are at Iowa, Northwestern, Michigan State and Illinois. Winning three of four is very doable, while winning all three tough Big Ten home games against Minnesota, Wisconsin and Penn State is possible.

Big 12 — Oklahoma State

Mike Gundy's program is at least a year away from being respectable in the Big 12 South, and more likely two or three after his fantastic 2006 recruiting class has time to mature. Even so, his Cowboys showed some heart last year, beating Texas Tech and scaring Texas for a half. Texas A&M, Nebraska and Oklahoma have to go to Stillwater.

Conference USA — East Carolina

If Skip Holtz's team could've just played a little bit of defense, it would've finished with a winning season. The offense should be one of the best in Conference USA, making up for more defensive deficiencies. It'll all come down to a three-week span against East favorites Southern Miss, UCF and Marshall.

MAC - Ball State

The Cardinals weren't all that bad last year once they got through with their suspensions. QB Joey Lynch might be the MAC's best quarterback.

Mountain West — San Diego State

For what seems like the 39th straight year, San Diego State is supposed to turn a corner. That might actually happen in Chuck Long's first season at the helm, as he gets to take advantage of some great recruiting classes from the past regime and star RB Lynell Hamilton.

Pac 10 — Stanford

Walt Harris had his down moments in his first season on The Farm, highlighted by a loss to UC Davis, but there were good battles in losses to UCLA and Notre Dame along with wins over Washington State, Arizona State and Oregon State. Everyone in the Pac-10 will be taking the

Cardinal lightly, but the Harris offense is good enough to pull off a few shockers.

SEC — Arkansas

With an opening-day game against USC and SEC home dates against Alabama, Tennessee and LSU, Houston Nutt's club should make plenty of noise in the West. The SEC road slate isn't horrible thanks to trips to Vanderbilt and Mississippi State.

Sun Belt — FIU

The Golden Panthers won four of their final five games in 2005 and should be even better this year. Defending Sun Belt champion Arkansas State has to come to Miami, as does UL Monroe and UL Lafayette. FIU's final four games, all against Sun Belt teams, are at home.

WAC — San Jose State

Don't expect miracles in Dick Tomey's second season, but the Spartans should be even more competitive than last year, when they finished the season with a two-game winning streak. 5-5 speedster Yonus Davis is a nice running back to build around.

Players you know who'll go nuclear in 2006

Rhett Bomar, QB Oklahoma

Dogged after struggling early and without Adrian Peterson to count on over a stretch, Bomar got better as the year went on against a nasty schedule. He's a superior all-around talent who should grow into his prep hype this year.

John David Booty, QB USC

Or Mark Sanchez. It was Booty as a 17-year-old true freshman who was supposed to take over for Carson Palmer, and then Matt Leinart turned into a legend. Booty has first-round NFL skills along with the nation's best receiving corps.

Alley Broussard, RB LSU

The star of the LSU backfield late in the 2004 season, Broussard missed all of last year with a knee injury. He had setbacks in spring ball, but he should be the focal point of the tremendous Tiger offense on opening day.

Colt Brennan, QB &

Davone Bess, WR Hawaii

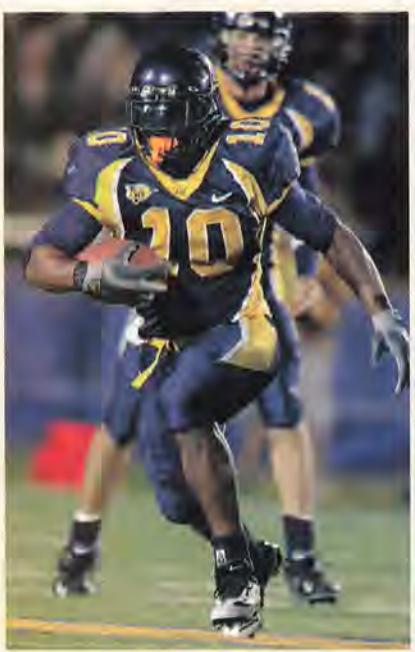
When it comes to Brennan, think Timmy Chang with talent. He threw for 4,301 yards and 35 touchdowns in his first year, along with showing off some good mobility, and now he has a more experienced receiving corps to work with. Head coach June Jones has said Bess, a true sophomore going into this year, is the best receiver he has ever been around. Bess caught 89 passes for 1,124 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Jamaal Charles, RB Texas

Overshadowed by Vince Young last season, Charles should be the star of the nation's top team after an 878-yard, 13 total touchdown season. While all the other great Longhorn backs could dip into the numbers, 1,500 yards and 15 touchdowns won't be out of reach.

Calvin Johnson, WR Georgia Tech

He'll be a top-15 pick in 2007. Johnson finally started to use his size and strength last year, catching 54 passes for 888 yards and six



Marshawn Lynch

Jonathan Ferrey/Getty

touchdowns, and now he should make a huge jump in overall production with QB Reggie Ball experienced enough to be more accurate.

Sam Keller or Rudy Carpenter, QB Arizona State

Until he got hurt, it could've been argued that Keller was the Pac-10's best quarterback, throwing for 2,165 yards and 20 touchdowns, along with nine interceptions, in just over seven games. Carpenter came in and finished as the nation's most efficient passer, throwing for 2,273 yards with 17 touchdowns and only two interceptions while completing 68% of his passes. If one of the quarterbacks plays the entire year, 4,500 yards and 40 touchdown passes are possible.

Marshawn Lynch, RB California

Dinged up for most of the year, Lynch still finished with 1,246 yards and ten touchdowns, capped off by a 194-yard, three-score day against BYU. Justin Forsett will certainly be a factor in the Cal ground game, but Lynch might pull a J.J. Arrington and hit 2,000 yards if he can stay healthy.

Sidney Rice, WR South Carolina

Rice became unstoppable with six 100-yard days in the final seven games, highlighted by a 12-catch, 191-yard, one touchdown day against Missouri. QB Blake Mitchell will have a year of experience under his belt and will be even better at getting his star target the ball.

Zac Taylor, QB Nebraska

The light bulb went on as last year progressed, and now Taylor should blossom in his second year as the starter. He has good receivers to work with like Nate Swift and Terrence Nunn, so a 3,000-yard, 25-touchdown season has to be expected.

Drew Weatherford, QB Florida State

Did anyone else realize that Weatherford was hung out to dry as a freshman? With no running game, a depleted offensive line and lousy play-

calling from the coaching staff, Weatherford still led the 'Noles to the ACC title, throwing for 3,208 yards and 18 touchdowns. If he can cut down on his 18 interceptions and develop more of a rapport with top target Greg Carr, Weatherford should be in the hunt for ACC Player of the Year honors.

The coaches who have to win this year ...

Call it a hot seat, a make-or-break year, or anything else you'd like to, but there might not be a 2007 for these ten coaches if they don't have big seasons. Don't expect too many firings since most of the usual bottom-feeders have made recent coaching changes.

10. Houston Nutt, Arkansas

After eight years at Arkansas, Nutt needs to come up with his first winning season since 2003 or he might not get a chance to let franchise recruit Mitch Mustain turn the program around.

9. Chuck Amato, NC State

Few are able to pull out the job-saving win better than Amato, but he'll have work to do with all the future NFL stars leaving his defense.

8. John Bunting, North Carolina

He has done a tremendous job considering the schedules his team has had to deal with, but there has been only one bowl game in the last four years.

7. Greg Robinson, Syracuse

He has only been there one year, but another season like last year's 1-10 disaster could start talk of a quick hook.

6. Rich Brooks, Kentucky

Yes, he's still there. Seven wins over D-I teams in three years appears to be acceptable. The best win during the Brooks regime came against Vanderbilt last year. The other eight wins were against Idaho State and Murray State (both D-II-AAers), Indiana, Ohio, and Mississippi State (who all went 2-10 in 2003), Indiana (3-8 in 2004), Vanderbilt (2-9 in 2004), and Mississippi State (3-8 last year).

5. Fisher DeBerry, Air Force

All the religious and racial controversies would blow over if DeBerry could come up with his first winning season in three years.

4. Dennis Franchione, Texas A&M

Only one winning season in the last three has many Aggie fans still wondering what was so bad about R.C. Slocum.

3. Phillip Fulmer, Tennessee

Not winning the SEC title puts coaches on the hot seat in Knoxville. Going 5-6 makes the buns burn.

2. Lloyd Carr, Michigan

Not being in the national title race since 1997 - bad. Struggling in the non-conference games, especially on the road - really bad. Losing to Ohio State four times in the last five years - nuclear.

1. Larry Coker, Miami

Not playing for national title at Da You is cause enough for putting a coach on the hot seat, but not winning conference titles is cause for a fire alarm. You can only blame the assistant coaches once.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL NEWS

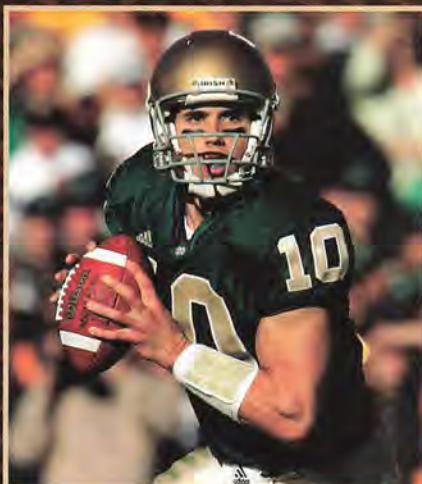
All-Americans



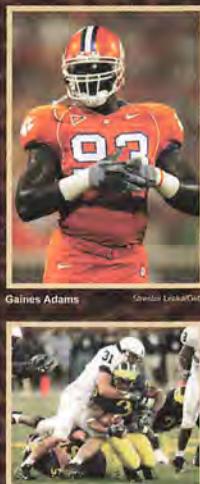
Adrian Peterson



Patrick Willis



Brady Quinn



Gaines Adams



Paul Posluszny

Even with Reggie, Vince, A.J. and Matt gone, there's more than enough star power for a top-to-bottom All-America team that's just as strong as last year ... if everyone is on the field. Dwayne Jarrett needs to be back after getting in trouble with the NCAA and Paul Posluszny, Joe Thomas and Daniel Sepulveda all have to be good as new from knee injuries, but everything is supposed to turn out fine with all of them. The strength is on the defensive front seven with pass rushers galore, while the top position is safety. The weakness is at corner without any worthy of a first-team slot. Looking to get the best players on the field, the lines and secondary are put together regardless of position.

QB Brady Quinn, Sr. Notre Dame

If Quinn can do that after one year under Charlie Weis, year two should be unbelievable.

RB Adrian Peterson, Jr. Oklahoma

The coaching staff isn't going to take it easy on its star. Peterson will run, run, and run some more while getting more work as a receiver.

RB Steve Slaton, Soph. West Virginia

After being one of the shocking new stars of the 2005 season, Slaton should go ballistic running behind a fantastic line.

WR Dwayne Jarrett, Jr. USC

Assuming he's back in the NCAA's good graces and is eligible, Jarrett will be thrown to even more until the new running backs are settled.

WR Sidney Rice, Soph. South Carolina

The big, strong, number one man in the Steve Spurrier offense will explode once he comes back healthy from a thumb injury.

TE Zach Miller, Jr. Arizona State

The NFL scouts can't wait for him to get to the next level. Size, speed, hands, blocking ability, acrobatic catches; Miller does it all.

OL Sam Baker, Sr. USC

The most consistent lineman on some of the greatest offensive machines in college football history will finally get more recognition.

OL Justin Blalock, Sr. Texas

One of the main reasons Vince Young had so many holes to run through could be an All-American at either guard or tackle.

OL Dan Mozes, Sr. West Virginia

He's the perfect leader for a great line as the team's anchor at center.

OL Arron Sears, Sr. Tennessee

Able to shine at tackle or guard, the versatile Sears needs to have a huge season as the only returning starter on the Vol line.

OL Joe Thomas, Sr. Wisconsin

Considered by some to be the best Badger lineman ever, he needs to come back healthy after suffering a torn ACL at the end of 2005.

PK Mason Crosby, Sr. Colorado

Not just a bomber, Crosby is also clutch. New head coach Dan Hawkins has said he'll allow his star to try a 70 yarder.

KR Felix Jones, Soph. Arkansas

Along with being a top speed back in the Hog offense, Jones should shine again after averaging 31.9 yards per return last season.

DL Gaines Adams, Sr. Clemson

With tremendous athleticism, Adams is a perfect fit for Clemson's Bandit position. He's an unstoppable pass rusher.

DL Lawrence Jackson, Jr. USC

A pass rushing terror with the speed of a linebacker in a 6-5, 265-pound frame, Jackson will be one of the Pac 10's most disruptive forces.

DL Brandon Mebane, Sr. California

There might not be a quicker tackle in the country. At 306 pounds and with his speed, he can do it all.

DL Quentin Moses, Sr. Georgia

He might not be huge and he's not always a rock against the run, but there are few better at consistently getting to the quarterback.

LB Rufus Alexander, Sr. Oklahoma

An All-America trash talker as well as a defender, he's a tackling machine with unlimited range.

LB Paul Posluszny, Sr. Penn State

Is he the best linebacker in Penn State's glorious history? He might be if he's back healthy after hurting his knee in the Orange Bowl.

LB Patrick Willis, Sr. Ole Miss

The hidden gem of last year is just now starting to get national respect. There isn't a better tackling linebacker in America.

DB Michael Griffin, Sr. Texas

Michael Huff won the Thorpe Award last year, but Griffin might have had the better year. The former running back has 238 career stops.

DB LaRon Landry, Sr. LSU

A proven playmaker with big-time hitting ability and 4.4 speed, Landry likely would've been a first round draft pick had he come out early.

DB Brandon Merriweather, Sr. Miami

A sure tackler with phenomenal range, he's good enough to be an all-star at either safety spot.

DB Eric Weddle, Sr. Utah

He's a phenomenal all-around athlete who has seen time almost everywhere from safety to cornerback to quarterback to punter to punt returner.

P Daniel Sepulveda, Sr. Baylor

The returning Ray Guy Award winner has to prove he can return healthy after hurting his knee playing basketball.

PR Steve Breaston, Sr. Michigan

Can he stay healthy? He also deserves All-America consideration as a kickoff returner.

The Rankings

COLLEGE FOOTBALL NEWS



Cedric Griffin #8, Tyrell Gatewood #1, Michael Huff #7, Aaron Ross #31, and Billy Pittman #5

Ronald Martinez/Getty



Dwayne Jarrett

Harry How/Getty

Schedules, schedules, schedules. It's a hard concept for many pollsters to grasp, but a great record doesn't always mean a team is great. Sometimes a team has back-to-back tough games and should hit a wall, some big conference teams miss playing some of the big boys, and some might have cream-puff non-conference schedules. Most teams would have a losing season with Florida's schedule, while most top 25 teams would easily have a ten-win season with Boise State's slate. Arizona might be a better team than Oregon State and still end up with a far worse record. That's why these rankings are based on how good the teams are going into the season and not necessarily how they'll end up. The projected records don't take into account potential conference title games.

1 USC (projected record: 11-1)

3 Biggest Games: 11/25 Notre Dame, 11/18 California, Oct. 14 Ariz. St. This isn't going to be the juggernaut of past seasons, but it's loaded with enough talent to play for another title.

2 Texas 10-2

3 Biggest Games: 9/9 Ohio State, 10/7 Oklahoma, 10/21 at Nebraska If the new quarterbacks are merely competent, a repeat trip to the national title game is more than possible.

3 Ohio State 10-2

3 Biggest Games: 9/9 at Texas, 11/18 Michigan, 9/30 at Iowa Don't worry about all the lost defensive stars; OSU reloaded. Troy Smith is in for a Vince Young-type season.

4 Oklahoma 11-1

3 Biggest Games: 10/7 Texas, 9/16 at Oregon, 11/4 at Texas A&M The national title is possible if Rhett Bomar can be consistent and Adrian Peterson doesn't run out of gas.

5 Miami 11-1

3 Biggest Games: 9/4 Florida St., 9/16 at Louisville, 11/4 Virginia Tech Is this the best Miami defensive back seven ever? The offense might only have to come up with 17 points to win.

6 Auburn 11-1

3 Biggest Games: 9/16 LSU, 10/16 Florida, 11/18 at Alabama The toughest games are at home until the finale against Bama. Everything should click on offense like 2004.

7 LSU 10-2

3 Biggest Games: 9/16 at Auburn, 10/7 at Florida, 11/24 at Arkansas If the offense is more consistent and the quarterback situation is settled, the Tigers could win another West title.

8 California 9-3

3 Biggest Games: 11/18 at USC, 9/2 at Tennessee, 9/23 Arizona State This is a much better team that it'll initially get credit for. The RBs and LBs are among the nation's best.

9 Florida 10-2

3 Biggest Games: 9/16 at Tenn., 10/28 Georgia, 11/25 at Florida St. Urban Meyer will have the Gators in the national title chase ... next year. This year's schedule is too nasty.

10 Tennessee 9-3

3 Biggest Games: 9/16 Florida, 10/7 at Georgia, 11/4 LSU Last year was a fluke. With a sense of urgency and former offensive coordinator David Cutcliffe returning, look out.

...the Rest

21	Arizona State 8-4	71	San Diego State 4-8
22	Penn State 9-3	72	East Carolina 6-6
23	Georgia Tech 9-3	73	Kentucky 4-8
24	Alabama 7-5	74	Houston 7-5
25	Missouri 7-5	75	Washington 4-8
26	Colorado 8-4	76	Nevada 8-4
27	Maryland 6-6	77	Illinois 5-7
28	Texas Tech 8-4	78	Stanford 5-7
29	Arkansas 9-3	79	Cincinnati 4-8
30	Wisconsin 9-3	80	Colorado State 5-7
31	TCU 9-3	81	UCF 6-6
32	Boston College 8-4	82	Marshall 5-7
33	Iowa State 7-5	83	Vanderbilt 2-10
34	Michigan State 6-6	84	Navy 7-5
35	Washington State 6-6	85	New Mexico 6-6
36	Oregon 7-5	86	Wyoming 3-9
37	Arizona 5-7	87	Memphis 6-6
38	Boise State 11-1	88	UAB 4-8
39	Utah 11-1	89	Duke 2-10
40	Oregon State 7-6	90	Akron 7-5
41	South Florida 8-4	91	SMU 5-7
42	NC State 6-6	92	Miami University 6-6
43	Pitt 7-5	93	Louisiana Tech 7-6
44	Texas A&M 8-4	94	UNLV 3-9
45	Fresno State 7-5	95	Central Michigan 5-7
46	UCLA 5-7	96	Air Force 4-8
47	Purdue 7-6	97	Western Michigan 5-7
48	Connecticut 6-6	98	Tulane 3-9
49	Minnesota 5-7	99	Bowling Green 7-5
50	BYU 8-4	100	Kent State 2-10
51	Virginia 7-5	101	UL Lafayette 7-5
52	South Carolina 6-6	102	Ball State 5-7
53	Northwestern 4-8	103	Eastern Michigan 3-9
54	Kansas 6-6	104	Ohio 2-10
55	Kansas State 4-8	105	MTSU 5-7
56	Tulsa 8-4	106	Troy 4-8
57	Ole Miss 6-6	107	Idaho 3-9
58	North Carolina 5-7	108	Arkansas State 4-8
59	Oklahoma State 4-8	109	North Texas 4-8
60	Rutgers 6-6	110	Rice 0-12
61	Southern Miss 7-5	111	Army 4-8
62	Northern Illinois 9-3	112	Utah State 1-11
63	Toledo 8-4	113	Florida International 5-7
64	Wake Forest 4-8	114	San Jose State 2-10
65	Baylor 4-8	115	UL Monroe 2-10
66	UTEP 8-4	116	New Mexico State 3-9
67	Syracuse 3-9	117	Buffalo 2-10
68	Mississippi State 4-8	118	Florida Atlantic 1-11
69	Indiana 4-8	119	Temple 0-12
70	Hawaii 9-4		

A faint, semi-transparent background image shows a person from the side, sitting at a desk and facing a computer monitor. The person appears to be wearing a dark t-shirt and shorts, and is leaning forward slightly. The background of the entire image is a solid blue.

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College Football News

Conference Previews



Troy Smith



Drew Weatherford

Doug Bonn/Getty

ACC

Atlantic Division

T1. Florida State

Predicted record: 10-2 Conf. record: 6-2
Best Player: QB Drew Weatherford, Soph.
This season will be a success if... Florida State is playing for the national title. If the 'Noles can win the opener at Miami, the toughest games left are all at home.

T1. Clemson

Predicted record: 10-2 Conf. record: 6-2
Best Player: DE Gaines Adams, Sr.
This season will be a success if... Clemson wins the Atlantic Division. The team is too experienced and too talented not to play for the ACC title.

3. Boston College

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 4-4
Best Player: OG Josh Beekman, Sr.

This season will be a success if... BC finishes with another nine-win season. The team isn't as good as last year's version and has brutal luck with the ACC schedule.

4. Maryland

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 3-5
Best Player: RB Josh Allen, Sr.

This season will be a success if... The Terps win eight games and beat at least one really, really good team. They're still about a year away from seriously challenging for the ACC title, so this has to be a positive-step season.

5. NC State

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 2-6
Best Player: C Leroy Harris, Sr.

This season will be a success if... State wins eight games. With a favorable ACC schedule and a light non-conference slate, anything less would be cause for screaming.

6. Wake Forest

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 1-7
Best Player: LB Jon Abbate, Jr.

This season will be a success if... Wake gets to a bowl game. It's hardly a lock with the nasty ACC games to deal with and six reasonably tough road games, but a hot start is likely.

Coastal Division

1. Miami

Predicted record: 11-1 Conf. record: 7-1

Best Player: FS Brandon Meriweather, Sr.

This season will be a success if... Miami wins the ACC title game. Goal number one has to be to win the ACC championship. Then the 'Canes can hope everything falls into place for something even bigger.

T2. Virginia Tech

Predicted record: 10-2 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: LB Vince Hall, Jr.

This season will be a success if... The Hokies go 10-2. Considering how many holes Tech has to patch up, winning double-digit games would be a major success.

T2. Georgia Tech

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: WR Calvin Johnson, Jr.

This season will be a success if... Tech finishes second in the Coastal Division. There are a few too many holes to expect a division title, but there's no reason not to go 6-2 in conference play.

4. Virginia

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: CB Marcus Hamilton, Sr.

This season will be a success if... Virginia wins eight games. If this year's team can better last year's 7-5 mark just by beating the teams it'll be favored against, the excitement will be through the roof for 2007.

5. North Carolina

Predicted record: 5-7 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: LB Larry Edwards, Sr.

This season will be a success if... UNC gets back to a bowl game. This isn't a good enough team to win the Coastal Division, but there's enough experience to come up with a winning season and get a 13th game.

6. Duke

Predicted record: 2-10 Conf. record: 0-8

Best Player: CB John Talley, Sr.

This season will be a success if... The Blue Devils win five games. That might be asking for the world with so many holes, but it's an attainable goal if they pull off home wins against Richmond, Vanderbilt, and Navy.

ALL-ACC OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

Calvin Johnson, WR Georgia Tech

Great college football superstars make things happen no matter what. Johnson might have first-round NFL talent, but he has to show he can be unstoppable and can always get open.

QB Drew Weatherford, Soph.	Florida State
RB James Davis, Soph.	Clemson
RB Micah Andrews, Jr.	Wake Forest
WR Calvin Johnson, Jr.	Georgia Tech
WR Chansi Stuckey, Sr.	Clemson
TE Greg Olsen, Jr.	Miami
OL Josh Beekman, Sr.	Boston College
OL Dustin Fry, Sr.	Clemson
OL Jared Gaither, Soph.	Maryland
OL Andrew Gardner, Soph.	Georgia Tech
OL Leroy Harris, Sr.	NC State
PK Jad Dean, Sr.	Clemson
KR Darrell Blackman, Jr.	NC State

ALL-ACC DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

Brandon Meriweather, S Miami

He's not huge at 6-0 and 188 pounds, but he's a sure tackler with phenomenal range. He has 202 career tackles and should be one of the nation's top all-around safeties.

DL Gaines Adams, Sr.	Clemson
DL Baraka Atkins, Sr.	Miami
DL Chris Ellis, Jr.	Virginia Tech
DL Andre Fluellen, Jr.	Florida State
LB Buster Davis, Sr.	Florida State
LB Vince Hall, Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB KaMichael Hall, Sr.	Georgia Tech
DB Brandon Meriweather, Sr.	Miami
DB Kenny Phillips, Soph.	Miami
DB John Talley, Sr.	Duke
DB Aaron Rouse, Sr.	Virginia Tech
P Adam Podlesh, Sr.	Maryland
PR Eddie Royal, Jr.	Virginia Tech

Jeff Gross/Getty

BIG EAST

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

Will West Virginia and Louisville be worthy of national title talk? Talent-wise, these two will be among the 15 best teams in the country, but they'll be under the microscope all season long. They each have weak league schedules compared to the other BCS conferences, and only one decent non-conference game each (Miami for Louisville, and Maryland for West Virginia). Big East apologists should get some ammo for their arguments as Pitt, Connecticut, Cincinnati and Syracuse should all be better than they were last season, and South Florida and Rutgers could be almost as good as their 2005 bowl-bound teams. Even though the league could use an overall boost in production, it'll make the most noise if the Cardinals and Mountaineers can stay unbeaten until their November 2nd showdown. Needing more chances to prove itself, the Big East needs its superpowers in the BCS.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

1. Linebackers. You don't normally think of big-time defenders when you think of the Big East, but it has some of the nation's best linebackers in Pitt's H.B. Blades and Clint Session, South Florida's Stephen Nicholas and Ben Moffitt, West Virginia's Kevin McLeer, Syracuse's Kelvin Smith, and Louisville's Nate Harris.
2. South Florida will start 5-0 in Big East play, and then the roof will cave in with road games at Louisville and West Virginia.
3. Pitt will take another step back to take a huge leap forward with several true freshmen seeing major playing time. It might pay off late in the year when this more athletic team will upset either West Virginia or Louisville.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Nov. 2, West Virginia at Louisville

Could this be a battle of two unbeaten teams? The Miami game might set the tone for the Cardinals, but they can't win the Big East title if they don't beat the Mountaineers. West Virginia will be the favorite in every other game.

ALL-BIG EAST OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

QB Brian Brohm, Louisville

The 6-4, 224-pound junior is coming off a torn ACL that cost him the last two games of the season, but that didn't stop him from being the Big East Offensive Player of the Year. Brohm has the arm, the smarts, and the touch to be a next-level star, and now he has to prove he can be the type of quarterback who can carry his team to a conference title. He's not a runner, but he can move a little bit and is able to throw well on the move. The key to his game is accuracy. When he gets into a groove, it's over.

QB Brian Brohm, Jr.	Louisville
RB Michael Bush, Sr.	Louisville
RB Steve Slaton, Soph.	West Virginia
WR Darius Reynaud, Jr.	West Virginia
WR Mario Urrutia, Soph.	Louisville
TE Clark Harris, Sr.	Rutgers
OL Dan Mozes, Sr.	West Virginia
OL Kurt Quarterman, Sr.	Louisville
OL Jeremy Steffey, Sr.	West Virginia
OL Ryan Stanchek, Soph.	West Virginia
OL Ted Watson, Sr.	South Florida
PK Arthur Carmody, Jr.	Louisville
KR Willie Foster, Sr.	Rutgers

ALL-BIG EAST DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

LB Stephen Nicholas, South Florida

Nicholas has seen time at both outside positions and has been dominant at each spot, with 224 career tackles, with 12.5 sacks and 38.5 tackles for loss. While he's not huge at 6-3 and 226 pounds, he hits like a Mack truck and has phenomenal range. Despite his lack of size, he would've been around an early-round draft pick had he left early.

DL Zach Anderson, Sr.	Louisville
DL Rhema Fuller, Sr.	Connecticut
DL Keileen Dykes, Jr.	West Virginia
DL Amobi Okoye, Sr.	Louisville
LB H.B. Blades, Sr.	Pitt
LB Stephen Nicholas, Sr.	South Florida
LB Kelvin Smith, Sr.	Syracuse
DB Tanard Jackson, Sr.	Syracuse
DB Mike McKens, Soph.	Cincinnati
DB Darrelle Revis, Jr.	Pitt
DB Eric Wicks, Sr.	West Virginia
P Brendan Carney, Sr.	Syracuse
PR Darrelle Revis, Soph.	Pitt



Steve Slaton

Streeter Lecka/Getty

BIG TEN

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

The Big Ten might not be as good overall as it has been in past seasons, but it's not going to be the walk in the park for Ohio State that many think it will. With several good veteran quarterbacks returning and plenty of parity, expect plenty of scoring and lots of unpredictability from this evenly balanced league. Michigan State, Minnesota and Purdue aren't going to be in the Big Ten title chase, but each has the type of attack that could blow up and ruin someone's dream season. Even the potential cellar-dwellers, Indiana, Illinois and Northwestern, will be dangerous. Expect weekly drama as high as any conference in the country with Ohio State, Iowa, Penn State and Michigan locked in a tremendous battle to see who can be in the BCS dance.

3 THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

1. Welcome to a leaner, meaner, angrier Michigan. These aren't the bruising Wolverines of the past. This is Lloyd Carr's most athletic team yet.
2. For the third straight season, Wisconsin will start out red-hot and get flattened in November. 9-1 is possible before facing Penn State and a road trip to Iowa.
3. Ohio State won't slip much in the defensive back seven despite all the huge losses. The secondary will be tremendous as the season goes on.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Sept. 30 Ohio State at Iowa

An Iowa win in Kinnick Stadium over the Buckeyes would likely mean it's a one-game season (October 21st at Michigan) for the Big Ten title. Ohio State will be coming off a tough battle with Penn State and could be walking into a bear trap.

ALL-BIG TEN OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

QB Troy Smith, Ohio State

Smith could be this year's version of Vince Young, and be a do-it-all star who carries his team to a title? After being suspended for the season opener and coming off the bench for the Texas game, he took over and was fantastic, showing off an accurate arm along with tremendous rushing skills.

QB Troy Smith, Sr.	Ohio State
RB Tyrell Sutton, Soph.	Northwestern
RB Albert Young, Jr.	Iowa
WR Dorien Bryant, Jr.	Purdue
WR Ted Ginn, Jr.	Ohio State
TE Matt Spaeth, Sr.	Minnesota
OL Alex Boone, Soph.	Ohio State
OL Levi Brown, Sr.	Penn State
OL Jake Long, Jr.	Michigan
OL Trevor Rees, Jr.	Northwestern
OL Joe Thomas, Sr.	Wisconsin
PK Kyle Schlicher, Sr.	Iowa
KR Ted Ginn, Jr.	Ohio State

ALL-BIG TEN DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

LB Paul Posluszny, Penn State

The Butkus Award winner as the nation's best linebacker last season, Posluszny has 256 career tackles and should finish his great career with well over 350 if he can return 100% from a knee injury suffered in the Orange Bowl. Considered a likely first-round draft pick if he had come out early, even with the knee injury, he's a smart, tough tackler who's always in the right position and is always around the ball.

DL Jay Alford, Sr.	Penn State
DL Ken Iweabema, Jr.	Iowa
DL Quinn Pitcock, Sr.	Ohio State
DL LaMarr Woodley, Sr.	Michigan
LB Dan Connor, Jr.	Penn State
LB Paul Posluszny, Sr.	Penn State
LB Mark Zalewski, Sr.	Wisconsin
DB Marquice Cole, Sr.	Northwestern
DB Leon Hall, Sr.	Michigan
DB Justin King, Soph.	Penn State
DB Joe Stellmacher, Sr.	Wisconsin
P Ken DeBauche, Jr.	Wisconsin
PR Steve Breaston, Sr.	Michigan

T1. Iowa

Predicted record: 11-1 **Conf. record:** 7-1

Best Player: QB Drew Tate, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Hawkeyes win 11 games and come up with at least a share of the Big Ten title. They'll be favored in every conference game but two (at Michigan and home against Ohio State).

T2. Ohio State

Predicted record: 10-2 **Conf. record:** 7-1

Best Player: QB Troy Smith, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Buckeyes play for the national title. The schedule is favorable and the Texas games comes just early enough that anything less than a game on January 8th, 2007 in Glendale, Arizona will be a major disappointment.

T3. Michigan

Predicted record: 10-2 **Conf. record:** 6-2

Best Player: RB Mike Hart, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... Michigan wins 11 games and beats Ohio State. The schedule has too many problems to go unbeaten, but the team is good enough to be in the hunt for a huge year.

T4. Penn State

Predicted record: 9-3 **Conf. record:** 6-2

Best Player: LB Paul Posluszny, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... PSU finishes second in the Big Ten race. It's not a good enough team to get through the conference season unscathed, but there won't be much of a slip, either.

T5. Wisconsin

Predicted record: 9-3 **Conf. record:** 5-3

Best Player: OT Joe Thomas, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... UW wins at least a share of the Big Ten title. There are way too many question marks to ask for an unbeaten season, but the talent is good enough and the schedule is relatively easy.

T6. Michigan State

Predicted record: 8-4 **Conf. record:** 4-4

Best Player: QB Drew Stanton, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Spartans win nine games and go to a bowl. This is hardly a great team, but there's no excuse to not win at least eight, with a win over a power like Ohio State or Notre Dame thrown in there.

T7. Illinois

Predicted record: 5-7 **Conf. record:** 2-8

Best Player: RB Pierre Thomas, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Illinois wins five games. Getting to six and a bowl game might be a little too much to ask out of a team that still needs a few years to emerge.

T8. Purdue

Predicted record: 7-6 **Conf. record:** 3-5

Best Player: WR Dorien Bryant, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... Purdue wins eight games. The 13-game schedule has plenty of rough patches, but there are only six games against bowl teams from last year.

T9. Minnesota

Predicted record: 5-7 **Conf. record:** 2-6

Best Player: TE Matt Spaeth, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Minnesota wins seven games and goes to another bowl. There are enough layups to have a nice base of four wins, and some upsets have to come.

T10. Indiana

Predicted record: 4-8 **Conf. record:** 1-7

Best Player: WR James Hardy, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... IU wins six games. It's a tall, tall, tall order for such a young team and with so many new starters.

T11. Northwestern

Predicted record: 4-8 **Conf. record:** 1-7

Best Player: RB Tyrell Sutton, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... the Wildcats win seven games and go back to the bowl, with the tragic death of head coach Randy Walker, who knows what shape the program will be in.

BIG 12

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

Expect a big bounce-back year from a league that had Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Tech, and then a bunch of mediocre teams over the past two seasons. The North is appreciably better with the re-emergence of Nebraska to national prominence, and Iowa State has one of its strongest teams ever. Texas Tech will still be a thorn in everyone's side, while Texas A&M should rebound after struggling thus far in the Dennis Franchione era. Colorado will be an X factor with Dan Hawkins taking over, adding more offensive firepower to this already-explosive conference. Of course, it will be all about the Sooners and Longhorns, at least early on, with both powerhouses among the handful of national title favorites. Are those two going to roll? Not likely. This should be the strongest the league has been from top to bottom since it was formed in 1996.

3 THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

1. Texas and Oklahoma will each lose a conference game outside of the Red River Rivalry. The Longhorns have to play back-to-back road games at Nebraska and Texas Tech, while OU could get tagged at either Missouri or Texas A&M.
2. Expect the quarterback play to be mediocre early on. You don't immediately replace Vince Young, Brad Smith, Reggie McNeal, Cody Hodges and Joel Klatt without going through some growing pains.
3. Keep an eye on how effective Oklahoma star RB Adrian Peterson is late in the year. Watch for a cranker-than-usual Bob Stoops if he has to answer questions about Peterson's health if the star has 200 carries under his belt by the time the Missouri game rolls around.

GAME OF THE YEAR

October 7, Oklahoma vs. Texas

Last year's 45-12 Longhorn drubbing of OU can be chalked up to a hurt Adrian Peterson, a not-ready-yet Rhett Bomar, and the magical Longhorn season. Two straight losses would mean the hex Bob Stoops once held over Mack Brown would officially be over, but a Sooner win would mean last year might have just been a fluky convergence of everything right happening for the orange side of the field.

ALL-BIG 12 OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

RB Adrian Peterson, Oklahoma

The best player in college football and the number one pick in the draft if/when he decides to come out next season, this franchise back has to stay healthy for a full season. He had problems with an ankle injury during the middle part of last year, carrying the ball a mere 16 times over a four-game span. Then he got healthy and ripped up the back half of the season with four straight 100-yard days, highlighted by a breathtaking 237-yard performance against Oklahoma State. He's a tremendous mix of 6-2 size, warp speed, and a warrior's mentality. His running style is a bit too upright and he takes a few too many big shots, but that's nitpicking for the NFL types to worry about.

QB Zac Taylor, Sr.

RB Jamaal Charles, Soph.

RB Adrian Peterson, Jr.

WR Joel Filani, Sr.

WR Jarrett Hicks, Sr.

TE Chase Coffman, Soph.

OL Justin Blalock, Sr.

OL Mark Fenton, Sr.

OL Corey Hilliard, Sr.

OL Adam Spieler, Jr.

OL Kasey Studdard, Sr.

PK Mason Crosby, Sr.

KR DeAndre Jackson, Sr.

Nebraska
Texas
Oklahoma
Texas Tech
Texas Tech
Missouri
Texas
Colorado
Oklahoma State
Missouri
Texas
Colorado
Iowa State

ALL-BIG 12 DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

S Michael Griffin, Texas

238 career tackles isn't bad for a former running back. Michael Huff won the Thorpe Award as the nation's best defensive back last season, but it could be argued that Longhorn teammate Griffin had the better year. He's one of the nation's best defensive backs, with next-level playmaking ability and unlimited range.

DL Larry Birdine, Sr.

DL Adam Carriker, Sr.

DL Tim Crowder, Sr.

DL Brian Smith, Sr.

LB Rufus Alexander, Sr.

LB Justin Warren, Sr.

LB Thaddeus Washington, Sr.

DB J.J. Billingsley, Sr.

DB Michael Griffin, Sr.

DE Andre Jackson, Sr.

DB David Overstreet, Sr.

PK Daniel Sepulveda, Sr.

PR Aaron Ross, Sr.



Adam Carriker

NORTH DIVISION

1. **Nebraska**

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: DE Adam Carriker, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Huskers win the Big 12 North. While many will set their sights on winning the league championship, this isn't as good a team as Oklahoma or Texas. Just getting to the title game for the first time since 1999 would be a fantastic step forward.

2. **Colorado**

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: PK Mason Crosby, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Buffs finish second in the Big 12 North. The schedule is too brutal and the rest of the division has improved too much to reasonably expect a fifth Big 12 title appearance in six years.

3. **Iowa State**

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: WR Todd Blythe, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... the Cyclones win the Big 12 North. After the last few seasons and with ten returning starters on offense, anything less than a 14-game season will be a tremendous disappointment.

4. **Missouri**

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: DE Brian Smith, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Tigers win the Big 12 North. It's going to take plenty of upside, but this team is too experienced to shoot for anything less.

5. **Kansas**

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: C David Ochoa, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... KU wins seven regular season games and goes back to a bowl game. If it can take advantage of the relatively soft schedule and the offense can come together, then it'll be the first time in the school's history for back-to-back bowls.

6. **Kansas State**

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 1-7

Best Player: LB Brandon Archer, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... KSU gets back to a bowl game. There are plenty of problems and too much young talent to count on for a big season, but the schedule is breezy enough to fall into a few wins simply by showing up.

SOUTH DIVISION

1. **Oklahoma**

Predicted record: 11-1 Conf. record: 7-1

Best Player: RB Adrian Peterson, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... OU wins the Big 12 championship. There are just enough holes to prevent a trip to the BCS title game, but a win over Texas on the way back to the top of the conference heap would do wonders after last year's slip.

2. **Texas**

Predicted record: 10-2 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: OT Justin Blalock, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Texas plays for the national title. After last year, would anything less be acceptable? If there isn't a Big 12 title, the heat will be back on Mack Brown.

3. **Texas Tech**

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: WR Jarrett Hicks, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Texas Tech wins ten games. It hasn't happened yet under Coach Mike Leach, despite coming close last year. The offense is good enough to simply out-bomb most of the better Big 12 teams.

4. **Texas A&M**

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: LB Justin Warren, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... A&M wins eight games and goes to a bowl. Anything less means a new coaching staff will be in place next year at this time.

5. **Baylor**

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: P Daniel Sepulveda, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... BU wins six games. It's a fair taller than it might seem, with the only sure wins to come against Northwestern State and Army.

6. **Oklahoma State**

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 1-7

Best Player: OT Corey Hilliard, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... OSU comes by with a winning season. Considering it'll likely be the underdog in every Big 12 game except the home date against Baylor, there can't be any misses in the non-conference schedule.

C-IUSA

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

Is this going to be the most wide-open conference race in all of college football? Tulsa and UCF played in last year's championship game, but they're hardly a lock to win their respective divisions, with Southern Miss, UTEP and Houston each appearing to be more stable than last season. If UCF can go from worst to almost first, and Tulsa can come out of nowhere, then it shouldn't be a shock if a rising program like East Carolina or Marshall pulls off the East title. SMU is on the verge of respectability and Memphis should be a factor from start to finish. The overall level of play should be raised with plenty of offensive stars, and unlike past years, a little more defense from teams like UTEP, Houston and UCF. Basically, expect a whole bunch of fun.

3 THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

1. The West will be the far weaker of the two divisions thanks to Tulane and Rice. SMU, despite being better, would likely finish last in the East. Even so ...
 2. ... the West will have loads of firepower thanks to all the veteran quarterbacks. UTEP's Jordan Palmer, Houston's Kevin Kolb, Tulsa's Paul Smith and Tulane's Lester Ricard will put up points in bunches.
 3. Memphis obviously will miss RB DeAngelo Williams, but Joseph Doss is a quick back who'll put up huge yards, while Jamarcus Gaither and T.J. Pitts each will have some big days.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Oct. 21, UTEP at Houston.

The Cougars and Miners each have tremendous firepower, led by their great quarterbacks. Houston's Kevin Kolb and UTEP's Jordan Palmer will battle it out for the upper hand in the West Division race.

ALL-CUSA OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

QB Kevin Kolb, Houston

The senior has cranked out 9,752 yards of career offense with 55 touchdown passes and 17 touch-down runs. Considering his talented receivers, and given that he threw for 3,258 yards last year, he has a chance to become Conference USA's all-time leading passer this year, if he can pass for 3,387 more yards.

QB Kevin Kolb, Sr.	Houston
RB Ahmad Bradshaw, Jr.	Marshall
RB DeMyron Martin, Soph.	SMU
WR Aundrea Allison, Sr.	East Carolina
WR Vincent Marshall, Sr.	Houston
TE Shawn Nelson, Soph.	Southern Miss
OL George Batiste, Sr.	Southern Miss
OL Blake Butler, Sr.	Memphis
OL Cedric Gagne-Marcoux, Sr.	UCF
OL Jeff Perrett, Sr.	Tulsa
OL Cornelius Rogers, Sr.	UAB
PK Darren McCaleb, Sr.	Southern Miss
KR Jessie Henderson, Soph.	SMU

ALL-CUSA DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

FS Wesley Smith, Memphis

The All-America safety made 98 tackles as a freshman, 89 as a sophomore and 82 last year, earning first-team All-Conference USA honors in each season. He's big, fast and as sure a tackling defensive back as there is in the country.

DL Marcus Hands, Jr.	East Carolina
DL Adrian Haywood, Sr.	SMU
DL Larry McSwain, Sr.	UAB
DL Alex Obomese, Sr.	UTEP
LB Matt Couch, Sr.	Marshall
LB Nick Bunting, Sr.	Tulsa
LB Jeremy Jones, Sr.	UTEP
DB Joe Burnett, Soph.	UCF
DB Curtis Keyes, Sr.	Marshall
DB Wesley Smith, Sr.	Memphis
DB Joe Sturdavant, Sr.	SMU
P Michael Gibson, Sr.	Memphis
PR Joe Burnett, Soph.	UCF

EAST DIVISION

T1. Southern Miss

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: OG George Batiste, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Southern Miss wins the Conference USA title. This is one of the few league programs that can honestly shoot for the big prize each and every year. Another New Orleans Bowl appearance will be a major disappointment.

T1. East Carolina

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: WR Aundrea Allison, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... ECU finishes with a winning year and goes to a bowl. If it's going to happen, they need a hot start and a few upsets over the second half of the year. Pirate fans are still trying to erase memories of their last post-season appearance, the 64-61 loss to Marshall in the 2001 MACB bowl.

T3. UCF

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 5-3

Best Player: RB Kevin Smith, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... UCF gets back to a bowl game. Yeah, it'll be or bust with the way last season went, but the schedule is too tough to demand or expect a second straight East championship. Another eight-win season would be fantastic.

T4. Memphis

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: FS Wesley Smith, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Memphis wins the East. While it's a tall order considering all the uncertainty on defense, the schedule and the firepower on offense should be enough to come close.

T4. Marshall

Predicted record: 5-7 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: RB Ahmad Bradshaw, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... Marshall wins the East. The league is better, but it's not all that great, and a good team could rise up in a hurry. Marshall has way too much experience to be as bad as last year and needs to make winning the East the main goal.

T6. UAB

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: LB Larry McSwain, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... UAB wins the East. It's dreaming big for a team that's not nearly as complete or as strong as several others in Conference USA, but it should be in the mix for the East title until late November. The sky's the limit if the quarterback situation becomes a positive.

WEST DIVISION

T1. UTEP

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: QB Jordan Palmer, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... UTEP wins the Conference USA title. Tulsa might be the league's best team, but UTEP is hardly going to whether as the second banana despite away games at Houston and Tulsa as part of a stretch of four conference road trips in five weeks.

T2. Tulsa

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 5-3

Best Player: LB Nick Bunting, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Tulsa wins the Conference USA title. They won't have the same mix of starting experience and a favorable schedule again for a long time. The first ten-win season since 1990 is also an attainable goal.

T2. Houston

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 5-3

Best Player: QB Kevin Kolb, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Houston wins the Conference USA title. They won't have the same mix of starting experience and a favorable schedule again for a long time. The first ten-win season since 1990 is also an attainable goal.

4. SMU

Predicted record: 5-7 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: RB DeMyron Martin, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... SMU has a winning season. There are way too many holes to win the West, but the schedule is soft enough to aim for seven wins and a possible bowl bid. It would be a disaster if this is another losing season.

5. Tulane

Predicted record: 3-9 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: QB Lester Ricard, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Tulane wins six games. It's not going to be easy; the Green Wave will be likely underdogs in their seven road games. It's going to require being nearly perfect at home and getting a road upset to get to .500.

6. Rice

Predicted record: 0-12 Conf. record: 0-8

Best Player: S Chad Price, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Rice comes up with three wins. It came close to beating UCF and UTEP in the second half of last season and beat Tulane, but it's going to take big upsets to come close to winning more than a few games.

EAST DIVISION**CONFERENCE OUTLOOK**

Expect more of the same. Sure, Central Michigan, Western Michigan and Ball State will be better, making the West a nastier division, but it'll be Northern Illinois and defending champion Akron the favorites to meet again for the title. Despite being in the chase for the championship, Toledo, Bowling Green and Miami have to do some rebuilding. None of the five top teams is a world-beater and it'll take a big upset to make much non-conference noise, despite several high-profile games against good BCS programs. The spotlight will shine brightest on NIU and star RB Garrett Wolfe, who'll be a threat for 2,000 yards, giving the league a much-needed marquee star after losing Bruce Gradkowski, Greg Jennings and Omar Jacobs.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

1. The West will be far better than the East. Ohio, Kent State and Buffalo would all likely finish at the West bottom, while Eastern Michigan would have a shot at a top-four spot if it was in the East.
2. Ball State will be this year's sleeper. It beat NIU and Akron late last year once all the team's suspensions were served, and should come out strong with Eastern Michigan and Buffalo in two of its first three MAC games.
3. Akron head coach J.D. Brookhart will have a higher profile gig next year at this time.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Nov. 7th Toledo at Northern Illinois.
The Rockets had absolutely owned the Huskies until a stunning 35-17 NIU win last year in the Rubber Bowl changed all of that. These should be the two best teams in the MAC, with the winner of this nationally televised showdown almost certain to represent the West in the conference title game.

ALL-MAC OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

RB Garrett Wolfe, Northern Illinois

One of the best backs in college football, the diminutive 5-7, 173-pound senior is quick enough to zip around defenders and strong enough to power his way over bigger ones. He's one of the strongest pound-for-pound players in the game to go along with phenomenal instincts and a burst of speed when he gets into the clear; he's simply one of the game's most dynamic backs. QB Phil Horvath, Sr. Northern Illinois RB Ontario Sneed, Soph. Central Michigan RB Garrett Wolfe, Sr. Northern Illinois WR Steve Odom, Sr. Toledo WR Ryne Robinson, Sr. Miami Univ. TE Chad Upshaw, Sr. Buffalo OL Jon Brost, Soph. Northern Illinois OL Doug Free, Sr. Northern Illinois OL John Greco, Jr. Toledo OL Kory Lichtensteiger, Jr. Bowling Green OL Joe Staley, Sr. Central Michigan PK Andrew Wallock, Sr. Eastern Michigan KR Scott Mayle, Sr. Ohio

ALL-MAC DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

DE Dan Bazuin, Central Michigan

The senior is known for being one of the nation's dominant pass rushers with 16 sacks and 26.5 tackles for loss last year, but he's also a tremendous run defender, finishing second on the team in tackles. Watch his profile skyrocket if he has big games early against Boston College and Michigan.

DL Dan Bazuin, Sr. Central Michigan DL Danny Muir, Sr. Kent State DL Devon Parks, Sr. Bowling Green DL Jermaine Reid, Sr. Akron LB Mike Alston, Sr. Toledo LB Thomas Keith, Jr. Central Michigan LB Matt Muncy, Sr. Ohio DB Joey Card, Sr. Miami Univ. DB Tyrrell Herbst, Jr. Toledo DB Dustin Utschig, Sr. Northern Illinois DB Jack Williams, Jr. Kent State P Chris Miller, Soph. Ball State PR Ryne Robinson, Sr. Miami Univ.

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

Utah broke through the BCS barrier in 2004, and TCU would've gotten in last year if the 2006 rules applied. Now the league is sniffing the big-time more and more with the Utes, Horned Frogs and BYU all dreaming, and deserving, of the major game spotlight. This isn't a great conference, as Air Force, UNLV and Wyoming are all mediocre, but it's the best of the non-traditional big-six BCS leagues and is sure to represent itself well in non-conference games. Even with the disparity between the top teams and the potential average ones, as always, there will be several upsets along the way. Expect San Diego State to be stronger under new head coach Chuck Long, and New Mexico and Colorado State each good enough to go bowling.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

1. There will be weekly battles between some of the most interesting offenses in the game. Utah, BYU and UNLV will all run some form of the spread. Air Force will try to be more balanced, and former UCLA head coach Bob Toledo is taking over the offensive coordinator duties at New Mexico.
2. If San Diego State RB Lynell Hamilton can finally stay healthy, he'll make a big push for Mountain West Player of the Year honors.
3. No one will want to play UNLV over the second half of the year. The addition of USC QB Rocky Hinds, JUCO WR Aaron Straiten, USC CB Eric Wright, and UCLA CB Mil'Von James will make the Rebels dangerous.

GAME OF THE YEAR

October 5th, TCU at Utah.
Running the Mountain West table is possible if the Horned Frogs can get over this brutal road trip to Salt Lake City. TCU won a 23-20 overtime classic last year to launch its big season, and now Utah will be looking to do the same. It's not an overstatement to think this might be the Mountain West title game.

ALL-MWEST OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

QB Brian Johnson, Utah

Johnson was becoming a superstar last year when he went down with a torn ACL. He's expected to be back at full strength this fall, but he'll have to battle with Brett Ratliff for the starting job. Johnson is the better player, but his knee has to be 100%.

QB Brian Johnson, Jr. Utah
RB Kyle Bell, Jr. Colorado State
RB Lynell Hamilton, Jr. San Diego State
WR Brian Hernandez, Sr. Utah
WR Johnny Walker, Jr. Colorado State
TE Jonny Harline, Sr. BYU
OL Jake Kuresa, Sr. BYU
OL Dallas Reynolds, Soph. BYU
OL Herbert Taylor, Sr. TCU
OL Tavo Tupola, Sr. Utah
OL Robert Turner, Sr. New Mexico
PK Kenny Byrd, Sr. New Mexico
KR Hoost Marsh, Jr. Wyoming

ALL-MWEST DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

SS Eric Weddle, Utah

Weddle has 213 career tackles, 20 tackles for loss, and nine sacks to go along with a boatload of big plays against the pass. He's a phenomenal all-around athlete who has seen time almost everywhere during his career, from safety to cornerback to quarterback to punter to punt returner.

DL Antwan Applewhite, Jr. San Diego State
DL Tommy Blake, Jr. TCU
DL Howie Fuiimaono, Sr. UNLV
DL Chase Ortiz, Jr. TCU
LB Beau Bell, Jr. UNLV
LB Casey Evans, Sr. Utah
LB Cameron Jensen, Sr. BYU
DB Terrell Maze, Sr. San Diego State
DB Robert Herbert, Sr. Colorado State
DB Eric Wright, Jr. UNLV
DB Eric Weddle, Sr. Utah
P Jimmy Kaylor, Jr. Colorado State
PR Hoost Marsh, Jr. Wyoming



Eric Weddle

George Frey/Getty

T4. Utah

Predicted record: 11-1 Conf. record: 8-0

Best Player: SS Eric Weddle, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Utes win the Mountain West title. The four conference road games are against teams that didn't go to a bowl last year. Anything less than a championship will be a major disappointment.

T2. TCU

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: DE Tommy Blake, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... TCU repeats as Mountain West champions. With all the returning talent and the success of last year, there's no reason to expect less. A spot in the BCS is an attainable goal if there's an early win over Texas Tech.

T2. BYU

Predicted record: 8-4 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: QB John Beck, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Cougars finish second in the Mountain West. This is a relatively lofty goal considering the defense is mediocre at best, and BYU faces road trips to TCU and Utah. The offense will simply out-bomb everyone else.

4. Colorado State

Predicted record: 5-7 Conf. record: 4-4

Best Player: RB Kyle Bell, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... CSU finishes second in the Mountain West. There are issues everywhere, from depth problems on the offensive line, to a lack of a proven number-one receiver, to the major concerns with the run defense.

5. New Mexico

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: OT Robert Turner, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... the Lobos finish second in the Mountain West. They're not as good as TCU or Utah, but they get to play those two league favorites at home, and they have enough overall talent to be in the hunt for the title.

T5. Air Force

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: QB Shaun Carney, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... Air Force has a winning season. This is probably no better than the sixth or seventh best team in the conference, but the schedule works out nicely with only three games (at Tennessee, Notre Dame and TCU) that it likely has little chance of winning.

T7. San Diego State

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: RB Lynell Hamilton, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... the Aztecs win eight games. It's not that lofty a goal if the new coaching staff can get a little more production out of the run defense and more efficiency and consistency out of the offense.

T7. UNLV

Predicted record: 3-9 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: CB Eric Wright, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... the Rebels win six games. There's still a long way to go talent-wise, and the early schedule is way too tough to hope for any sort of run for a conference title, but that doesn't mean this improved team can't be in the hunt for a bowl game.

T7. Wyoming

Predicted record: 3-9 Conf. record: 2-6

Best Player: SS John Wending, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... UW gets to a bowl game. If the team is any good, it should beat Utah State, Air Force and San Diego State, and it needs to win road games at Syracuse, New Mexico and UNLV. A big upset here or there will also be a must.

PAC TEN

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

OVERRATED BY LEFT COASTERS AND UNNOTICED BY THE right side of the country, the non-USC Pac-10 teams were decent, but nothing special over the last few years. Not anymore. Expect the league to come roaring back with more than just the mighty Trojans. Cal is a legitimate national title contender, Oregon and Arizona State are good enough to challenge for an at-large BCS slot, and everyone else outside of UCLA should be better than last year. Stanford, Washington State and Oregon State will be far more dangerous and will be a tough battle every week, and Arizona should finally put it all together under Mike Stoops and be more consistent. Of course, all eyes will be on USC to see if it can reload and remain a juggernaut. The Trojans will continue to bring attention to the league; the rest of the country then may notice how good everyone else is.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

1. Almost by default, the starting USC quarterback will be a Heisman finalist. John David Booty and Mark Sanchez are really that good, and they have the talent around them to put up Matt Leinart-like numbers.
2. The addition of defensive ends Loren Howard from Northwestern and Tranell Morant from Florida along with former BYU tackle Michael Marguad will make Arizona State a factor in the Pac-10 race.
3. California's linebacking corps might not just be the Pac-10's best; it might be the best in the country. The world will notice in the opener at Tennessee.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Nov. 18 California at USC

Each team has major landmines to step around, but this should be the battle for the Pac-10 title, and with a little luck here and there, this could be a spot in the national title game.

ALL - PAC-10 OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

WR Dwayne Jarrett, USC

This is assuming he's back after having problems with the NCAA. He can do it all, with too much size for most college corners and too much athleticism to be nullified by a double-team. He was the best wide receiver in America last year, but now he'll have to shine without Matt Leinart throwing him the ball.

QB Sam Keller, Sr.	Arizona State
RB Yvenson Bernard, Jr.	Oregon State
RB Marshawn Lynch, Jr.	California
WR Jason Hill, Sr.	Washington State
WR Dwayne Jarrett, Jr.	USC
TE Zach Miller, Jr.	Arizona State
OL Sam Baker, Sr.	USC
OL Ryan Kalil, Sr.	USC
OL Enoka Lucas, Sr.	Oregon
OL Roy Schuening, Jr.	Oregon State
OL Shannon Tevaga, Jr.	UCLA
PK Alexis Serna, Jr.	Oregon State
KR Terry Richardson, Sr.	Arizona State

ALL-PAC 10 DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

DT Brandon Mebane, California

He's a defensive end built into a 6-3, 306-pound body with tremendous quickness into the backfield. He was one of the league's top linemen last year even though he suffered through an ankle injury and constant double-teaming.

DL Mirkristo Bruce, Sr.	Washington State
DL Sedrick Ellis, Jr.	USC
DL Lawrence Jackson, Jr.	USC
DL Brandon Mebane, Sr.	California
LB Rey Maualuga, Soph.	USC
LB Keith Rivers, Jr.	USC
LB Desmond Bishop, Sr.	California
DB Antoine Cason, Jr.	Arizona
DB Patrick Chung, Soph.	Oregon
DB Dayneione Hughes, Sr.	California
DB Sabby Piscitelli, Sr.	Oregon State
P Sean Douglas, Sr.	Washington
PR Terry Richardson, Sr.	Arizona State



John David Booty

Stephen Dunn/Getty

SFC

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

The SEC might have been mediocre last year by its own high standards, but it's back to being the best conference in the nation...and it's not even close. Even so, everyone appears to be a year away from being really, really, really good. Urban Meyer is recruiting his tail off at Florida on his way to creating USC East, SEC champ Georgia is nasty again despite needing to reload, Tennessee will quickly rebound with David Cutcliffe as offensive coordinator, and LSU and Auburn belong in the discussion of the five best teams in America. Alabama and South Carolina won't do what they did last year, but they'll still be solid. Arkansas will be back to its old bowl-bound ways, and Ole Miss and Mississippi State will be much improved.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

1. Quarterback controversies. The SEC has never had so much young quarterback talent, and they're all ready to play. Georgia's Matthew Stafford, Florida's Tim Tebow, LSU's Ryan Perrilloux and Arkansas' Mitch Mustain all have NFL potential, but all will start out on the bench.
2. Florida and LSU each will finish with two losses despite being among the best teams in America. Most teams would struggle to go .500 with Florida's schedule.
3. The league will get its shots in on Steve Spurrier. South Carolina will start out 4-2 before hitting a scheduling wall.

GAME OF THE YEAR

September 16th, LSU at Auburn

The LSU version of the Tigers won a 20-17 thriller last season and has to come out of the conference opener with a win or face the daunting task of having to win in Gainesville and Knoxville to have any hope of playing for the SEC title. If Auburn wins, it should be 6-0 going into the showdown with Florida.

ALL-SEC OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

RB Kenny Irons, Auburn

The former South Carolina transfer ripped it up in last year's spring game and went on to be one of the SEC's best players. Irons had eight 100-yard days, showing off tremendous home-run speed, highlighted by a brilliant 218-yard day in the loss to LSU. He's not a power runner, but he's physical and doesn't go down easily. When he has a sliver of daylight, he'll tear off a huge gain. He's a superior athlete with next-level speed.

QB Chris Leak, Sr.	Florida
RB Kenny Irons, Sr.	Auburn
RB Darren McFadden, Soph.	Arkansas
WR Dwayne Bowe, Sr.	LSU
WR Sidney Rice, Soph.	South Carolina
TE Eric Butler, Jr.	Mississippi State
OL Antoine Caldwell, Soph.	Alabama
OL Daniel Inman, Sr.	Georgia
OL Michael Oher, Soph.	Ole Miss
OL Arton Sears, Sr.	Tennessee
OL Brian Stamper, Sr.	Vanderbilt
PK Brandon Coutu, Jr.	Georgia
KR Felix Jones, Soph.	Arkansas

ALL-SEC DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

LB Patrick Willis, Ole Miss

Willis will no longer be the hidden gem that only SEC fans know about. He's a fast 6-2 and 230 pounds, and was good enough to have been no worse than a second-round NFL draft pick had he decided to leave early. Willis was dominating last season, with five games of double-digit solo tackles on the way to leading the nation in solo stops.

DL Justin Harrell, Sr.	Tennessee
DL Jarvis Moss, Jr.	Florida
DL Quentin Moses, Sr.	Georgia
DL Marcus Thomas, Sr.	Florida
LB Sam Olajubutu, Sr.	Arkansas
LB Brandon Siler, Jr.	Florida
LB Patrick Willis, Sr.	Ole Miss
DB Fred Bennett, Sr.	South Carolina
DB Jonathan Hefney, Jr.	Tennessee
DB LaRon Landry, Sr.	LSU
DB Reggie Nelson, Jr.	Florida
P Eric Wilbur, Sr.	Florida
PR Rafael Little, Jr.	Kentucky

EAST DIVISION

1. Florida

Predicted record: 10-2 Conf. record: 7-1

Best Player: QB Chris Leak, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Florida wins the SEC title. Who cares that the offense is still at least a year away from being up-to-Urban-snuff? Who cares that most teams would jump for joy to go 5-7 with Florida's schedule? Anything less than an SEC title might make the Gators this year's Tennessee.

2. Tennessee

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: OT Arron Sears, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... The Vols win the SEC East. After last year, anything less than an appearance in the SEC title game will leave the sour taste of 2005 in everyone's mouth. The schedule, athleticism, and fire are all in place for a good season.

3. Georgia

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 5-3

Best Player: DE Quentin Moses, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Georgia wins ten games. It doesn't have quite enough firepower to win the SEC title, or even the SEC East if Florida plays as well as expected and if Tennessee rebounds, but it'll get back to a bowl game and it should have a good chance at finishing with double-digit wins.

4. South Carolina

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: WR Sidney Rice, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... USC wins eight games. This team isn't great, but Steve Spurrier has enough offensive weapons to be more than competitive and crush someone's SEC title dreams.

5. Kentucky

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 1-7

Best Player: RB Rafael Little, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... UK wins six games and is better against the top teams. Anything less than the post-season, especially with a relatively light schedule for an SEC East team, might mean the end of the Rich Brooks era.

WEST DIVISION

1. Auburn

Predicted record: 11-1 Conf. record: 7-1

Best Player: RB Kenny Irons, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Auburn wins the SEC title. That would make it an extremely impressive two in three years. It's not every season you get so many big conference games at home and the Tigers must take advantage.

2. Vanderbilt

Predicted record: 2-10 Conf. record: 0-8

Best Player: WR Earl Bennett, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... Vandy wins five games. Forget about beating the big boys without Jay Cutler slinging it anymore, but there's no reason it can't beat all the teams its own size.

2. Arkansas

Predicted record: 9-3 Conf. record: 6-2

Best Player: RB Darren McFadden, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... The Hogs end up with a winning season and go to a bowl. Another losing season wouldn't get Nutt fired, but it would put him on double-secret probation for 2007.

4. Alabama

Predicted record: 7-5 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: RB Ken Darby, Sr.

This season will be a success ifBama wins nine games. The home slate is too light to shoot for anything less, and an upset or two on the road will mean another double-digit year. Expecting to be a major factor in the SEC West race is asking for way too much considering all the new starters on defense.

4. Ole Miss

Predicted record: 6-6 Conf. record: 3-5

Best Player: LB Patrick Willis, Sr.

This season will be a success ifthe Rebels win seven games. It'll take at least one big upset and no slip-ups against the teams its own size, but Ole Miss should be just good enough to be able to squeak out a few more wins.

6. Mississippi State

Predicted record: 4-8 Conf. record: 1-7

Best Player: LB Quinton Culberson, Sr.

This season will be a success ifMSU wins six games. The defense is too good and there are too many improvements on offense to expect another losing season. The Bulldogs won't battle for the SEC West title, but they could be the league's jump-up team.

SUN BELT

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

For better or worse, the Sun Belt will be the most even conference in the nation from one through eight. This dead-even league will have weekly battles without shocking upsets, thanks to parity and few sure things to count on among the contenders. North Texas should bounce back from last year's disaster to be in the hunt again, but UL Lafayette is the class of the conference with a ground game that should be enough to get them to the New Orleans Bowl. Florida International should be this year's high-riser after a strong end to the 2005 season. Arkansas State, Troy and Middle Tennessee will have good enough defenses to stay in the title hunt all year long.

3 THINGS TO WATCH FOR

- After losing 26 of 27 games against other D-I teams last year, the Sun Belt will go wireless outside of the league except for the D-IIAA layups.
- The best thing about the 2006 UL Monroe season will be the nickname change from Indians to Warhawks.
- North Texas RB Jamario Thomas will be a threat for 2,000 yards behind an improved line and with all the carries coming his way.

GAME OF THE YEAR

Nov. 25th, Arkansas State at UL Lafayette

There might not be a closer set of games over the last ten years than the series played by the Indians and the Ragin' Cajuns. Since 1997, these two have played seven times, with ULL holding a 4-3 advantage with the four wins coming by a total of 11 points. ASU's wins have been by four, six and three. The winner of this year's showdown will likely win the conference title.

ALL-SUN BELT OFFENSE

Offensive Player of the Year:

RB Jamario Thomas, North Texas

He didn't get much work last year thanks to a hamstring problem and the return of Patrick Cobb, but the speedy junior should regain the form that got him 1,801 yards and 17 scores in 2004.

QB Clint Marks, Sr.	MTSU
RB Eugene Gross, Sr.	MTSU
RB Jamario Thomas, Jr.	North Texas
WR Johnny Quinn, Sr.	North Texas
WR Chandler Williams, Sr.	FIU
TE Samuel Smith, Sr.	FIU
OL Kyle Cunningham, Jr.	U Monroe
OL Brandon Cox, Sr.	UL Lafayette
OL Nello Faulk, Sr.	Florida Atlantic
OL Dylan Lineberry, Sr.	North Texas
OL Aaron Schutz, Soph.	UL Monroe
PK Greg Whibbs, Soph.	Troy
KR Leodis McElvain, Jr.	Troy

ALL-SUN BELT DEFENSE

Defensive Player of the Year:

LB Keyonvis Bouie, FIU

One of the nation's best-kept secrets will be unearthed this season. Bouie is a top tackler with phenomenal range and a nose for the ball. 150 tackles isn't out of the question if he stays healthy and plays a full 12 games.

DL Antwan Barnes, Sr.	FIU
DL Jeremiah Chapman, Jr.	North Texas
DL Kenny Mainor, Soph.	Troy
DL Ricky Williams, Jr.	UL Monroe
LB Keyonvis Bouie, Sr.	FIU
LB J.K. Sabb, Sr.	MTSU
LB Josh Williams, Jr.	Arkansas State
DB Tyrell Johnson, Jr.	Arkansas
DB Kevin Payne, Sr.	UL Monroe
DB Bradley Robinson, Jr.	MTSU
DB Chaz Williams, Jr.	UL Monroe
P Colby Smith, Sr.	MTSU
PR Leodis McElvain, Jr.	Troy



Jamario Thomas, Jr.

College Football News

WAC

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK

No league has a bigger chasm between the haves and have-nots. While that's lousy for WAC fans hoping for a fun season, it's great for a Boise State team dreaming to be a part of the BCS if it can beat Oregon State and Utah. Fresno State, Nevada and Hawaii are all good enough to play with anyone in the country for at least a half, and Louisiana Tech is decent, but then things drop off the map with San Jose State, Idaho (even with the addition of head coach Dennis Erickson), Utah State and New Mexico State among the worst teams in college football. More interesting than the WAC race will be the non-conference games with top teams facing Arizona State, Alabama, LSU, Oregon and Oregon State.



Jared Zabransky

Andy Lyons/Getty

1. Boise State

Predicted record: 11-1 **Conf. record:** 8-0

Best Player: LB Korey Hall, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Boise State gets to the BCS. It'll take 11 wins with the one loss coming in a nail-biter, but the schedule is too light and the team is too loaded to shoot for anything less. Even if the formula doesn't end up working out and the Broncos don't go to one of the big games, a WAC title would be nothing to sneeze at.

2. Hawaii

Predicted record: 9-4 **Conf. record:** 6-2

Best Player: WR Davone Bess, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... The Warriors go back to a bowl game. With this much firepower and the WAC schedule opening up the way it does after a brutal opening three games, a seven-win regular season is a must, and nine is possible.

3. Nevada

Predicted record: 8-4 **Conf. record:** 6-2

Best Player: QB Jeff Rose, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Nevada wins the WAC title. It won't be easy with road games at Fresno State, Hawaii and Louisiana Tech, but Boise State has to come to Reno, and the second half of the schedule is soft enough to make a run possible. After last year, anything less than a title would be a disappointment.

4. Fresno State

Predicted record: 7-5 **Conf. record:** 6-2

Best Player: C Kyle Young, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Fresno State wins the WAC title. It has to be the goal for a program that hasn't gotten it done under head coach Pat Hill. Playing well against Oregon and LSU would be icing on the cake, but they need to finally get over the hump and become the outright best team in the league.

5. Louisiana Tech

Predicted record: 7-6 **Conf. record:** 5-3

Best Player: WR Eric Newman, Sr.

This season will be a success if ... Tech goes bowling. It'll have to survive seven road games in the first nine, but things soften up the rest of the way. The WAC title is out of the question.

6. Idaho

Predicted record: 3-9 **Conf. record:** 2-6

Best Player: RB Jayson Bird, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... Idaho wins at least four games and pulls off one good upset. Considering Idaho hasn't won more than three games since 2000, four wins would be a nice first step in the Dennis Erickson era.

7. New Mexico State

Predicted record: 3-9 **Conf. record:** 1-7

Best Player: WR A.J. Harris, Soph.

This season will be a success if ... The Aggies win five games. The two D-IIAA games have to be locks, and there has to be at least a split on the road against Idaho and Utah State. The home date with San Jose State also is a must-win, and they need one out-of-the-blue upset to make this happen.

8. San Jose State

Predicted record: 2-10 **Conf. record:** 1-7

Best Player: RB Mat Cantu, Sr.

This season will be a success if the Spartans win six games. It'll take a few upsets and at least two road wins, which harder than it sounds for a program without an away victory since 2003.

9. Utah State

Predicted record: 1-11 **Conf. record:** 1-7

Best Player: WR/PR Kevin Robinson, Jr.

This season will be a success if ... Utah State wins five games. Having not won five or more games in five years, it would be a good turnaround season to go into late November with an outside chance of pulling off six victories.

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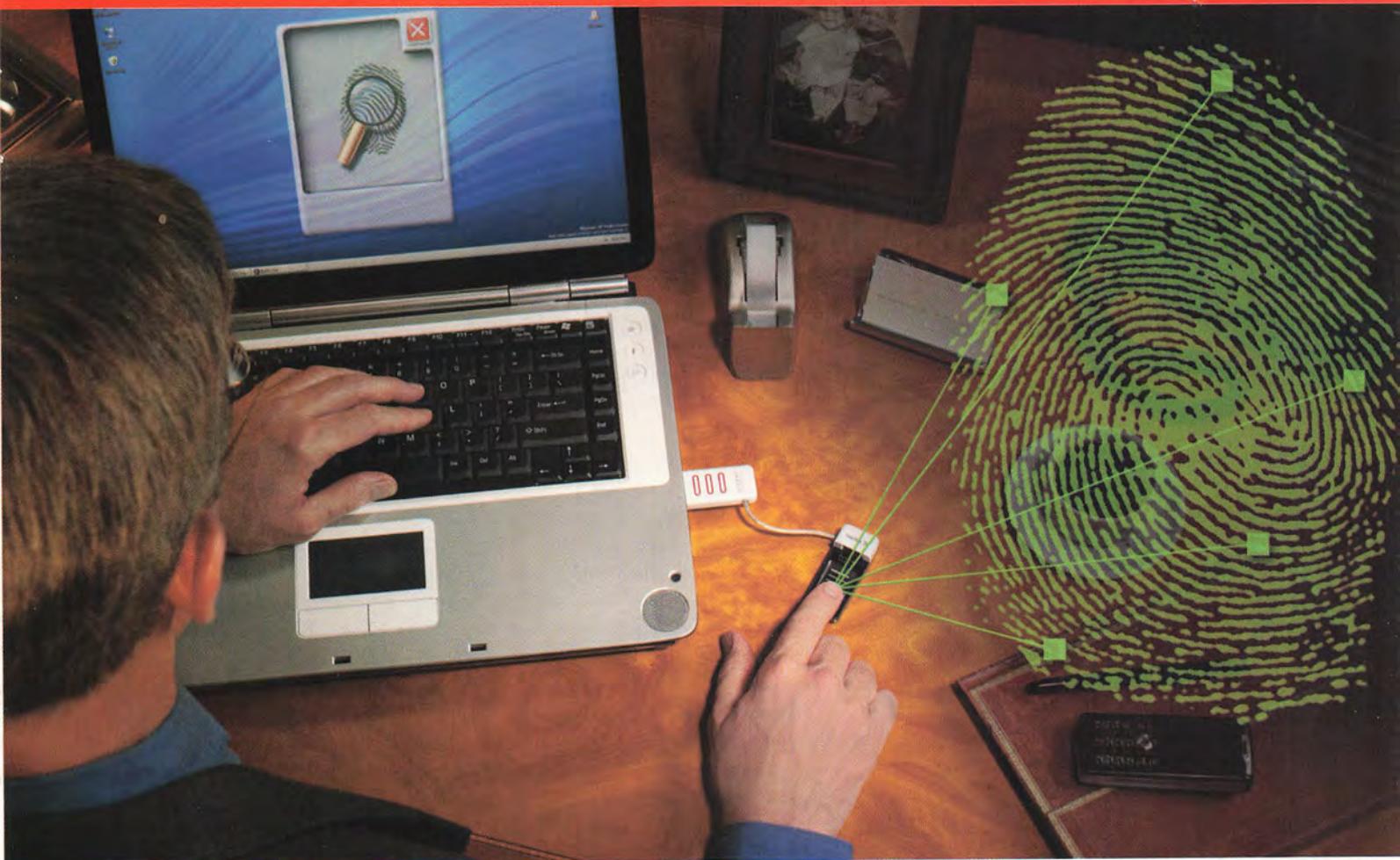
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Soccer Outlook

Staley has good perspective on his sport

Thinking of skipping this story? Many college football fans, which obviously includes readers of **'BAMA**, might only slow down at the women's soccer preview story; just long enough to lick the thumb and forefinger to turn the page.

And while an estimated one billion soccer fans watched the World Cup Final this summer between Italy and France, the sport still received, at best, an icy cool welcome in the United States.

Don Staley understands this sentiment. Often, the game is painfully slow. It has offsides, but no line of scrimmage. The difference between a legal tackle and a penalty-drawing foul is often indistinguishable. For American football-lovers, soccer is an acquired taste at best.

But he defends the game even more passionately, challenging that anyone who had the full experience of the pageantry and ambiance of a high-level English league soccer game there would be a lot less soccer bashing.

And he's working this year to get attendance and interest in his 2006 squad up from previous years. Lest anyone think he's lost a fire he once had, he's planning on being a little more vocal as he enters his 13th season at the Capstone.

"Going into this year I have decided I will call things more like I see it," he said. "It won't be a complete return of the carnival barker, but I'll say what I feel."

It's not like Staley is known for holding back. He once berated an opposing non-conference opponent's coach in the local paper for refusing to budge on a scheduling conflict despite generous offers of compromise, then preceded to notch a 20-0 win against the fledgling squad.

The head coach of the Alabama soccer team, in his 12th season at Alabama, was the eldest of four boys in his football-playing family. A couple of his brothers were big and talented enough to

play college ball at Elon. Staley said football was his first love.

But the stumpy high school sophomore chose a path almost unthinkable in the mid 1970s, a decision forced when Ben L. Smith High School in Greensboro North Carolina, where Staley matriculated, implemented a policy that prohibited two-sport athletes at the high school. After the school announced the policy, the football coach approached Staley to find out if he'd told the soccer coach he was quitting the team.

"I looked at him and said, 'Coach, I'm not going to go anywhere in football,'" Staley remembered. "It was tough on my dad. I was just thinking about my dad and thinking back on the first day my dad watched a game."

"He watched it from the car."

Staley certainly did his part, and then some, to add some pizzazz to the game, both as a player and later as a coach. His dad built to a point where he would come out of the car and into the stands to watch his son play, but he was quick to leave if he felt his son was hot-dogging, "and that happened once or twice," Staley said.

When tabbed to take over the soccer program, Staley proudly reflects that he was a "carnival barker" at Radford. One of the men Staley barked at first was then Virginia coach, and later 2006 World Cup Team USA coach, Bruce Arena. A year after Virginia had beaten Radford handily, Staley took over and claimed to be the Billy Martin of Northern Virginia soccer, said he was putting Arena on notice, and that Radford was gunning for UVA.

Everyone thought he'd lost his mind, that he was ticking off the superior-talent Virginia team and setting his team up for a thrashing.

"What I was really doing was putting the fear of God into my players that they were going to try to beat us 19-0," Staley recalled. As he has a knack

for doing, Staley snagged some headlines for his remarks, and some 4,000-plus fans came out to watch the match.

Virginia beat Radford that year, 1-0, "but the great thing about it was that Bruce Arena did have to get up off the bench and he did have to coach."

Later he got called in to the athletic director's office after he told the local newspaper that he heard the Virginia Tech football team was coming to Radford to watch the soccer match between the two schools "if they could find their way out of Blacksburg."

But he insists that the carnival barker hasn't really existed since he's been at Alabama. If you've been to an Alabama soccer game, it's hard to believe Don Staley has calmed down even if it's true. The 47-year-old coach is one of the most animated in his profession, with fans, officials and his own players.

Staley isn't only bravado and animation, however. And on a Friday morning in early July with the season still over a month away, and when most athletic offices are barely stirring, Staley was in full executive mode.

Not only was he in bright and early, but so were two assistants, Katie Barnes and Jeremy Hampton. Staley was multi-tasking: e-mailing a prospect, receiving updates on a signee who it seemed was stuck in bureaucratic red tape, working with assistants to log calls for compliance, setting up in-home visits, and advising another assistant on how to communicate with a prospect.

"My take on what I do is administering the program from making sure we have paper products in the bathroom, to recruiting, to managing a staff," he said. "My haven is right there at the bench and recruiting."

It just so happens that each one of those tasks has gotten a boost recently, and it's all tied in with the building boom on campus. Before opening its new stadium last year, the Tide's facility was

simply lackluster, affecting the lifeblood of any program—recruiting. That's all changed now.

"With these facilities it has put us in the game to go out and get people," Staley said. "When I say these facilities, I'm not just talking about soccer stadium. I'm talking about the CASS (academic) center, the strength and conditioning and everything on campus."

"We've missed on one recruit this year," he said.

And he took full advantage last year, as well, bringing in 13 freshmen to the program. (Soccer is an equivalency sport, meaning the 11 scholarships available to the squad can be divided up.) All but one of those freshmen saw time on the pitch last year

when the squad was 8-8-2 with a 2-7-2 conference record (one of those wins a 6-3 victory over Auburn, and the other against LSU), something Staley thinks will pay dividends in the future.

Staley's demeanor has evolved over the years, but his basic outlook on the game has remained steady. "When teams play me," Staley said, "they are always going to say they're tough to play, physical and good on re-starts."

He's counting on the return of his best goal scorer, junior Jordan O'Banion, as one of the staples in a lineup with most of the spots wide open. O'Banion suffered a season-ending knee injury last season after just eight games, but is expected back healthy for her junior season.

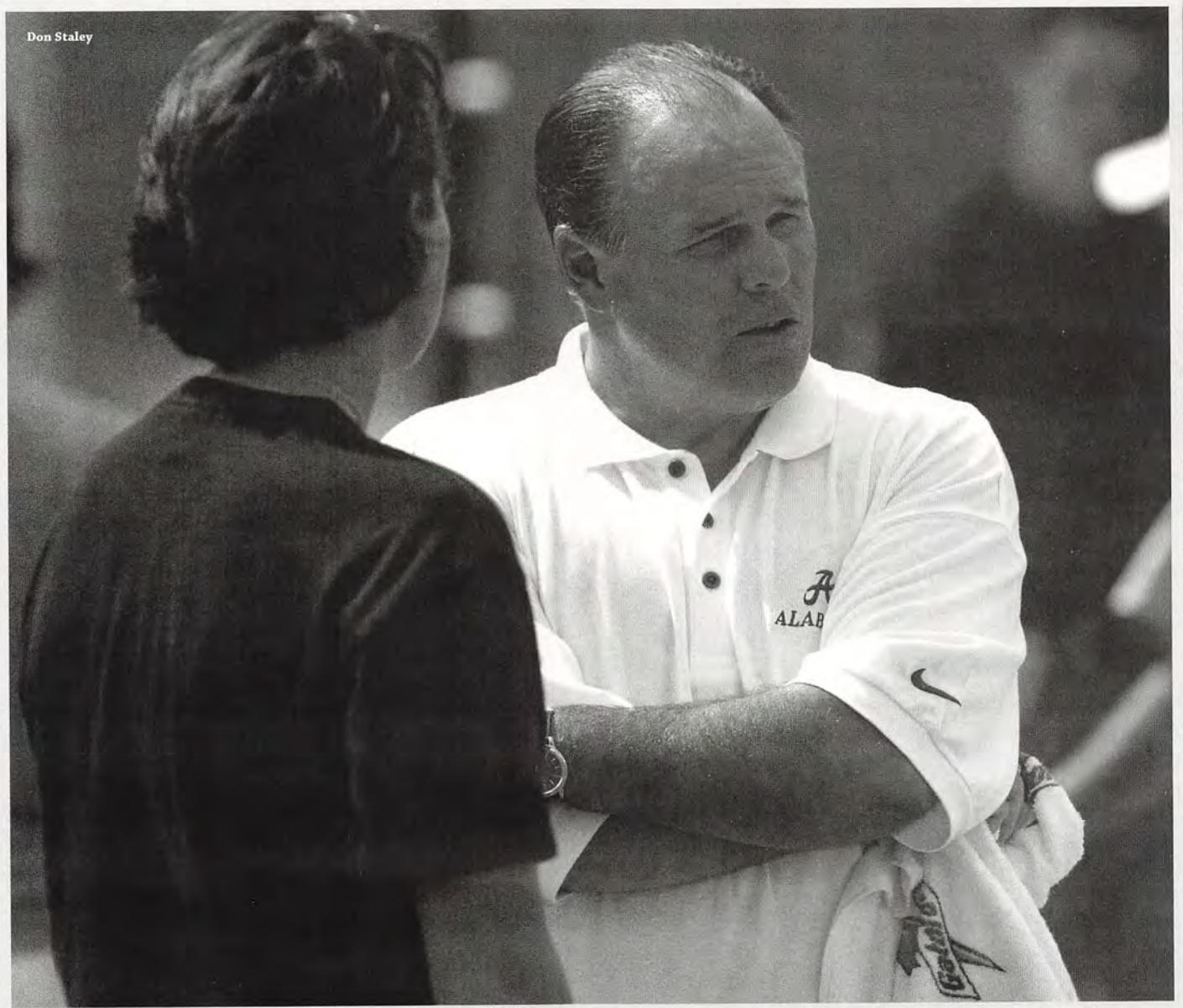
A pair of freshmen forwards, Grace Lawson and Kelcy King, have a golden opportunity to come in and play right away at the striker positions, and there could be as many as four newcomers dotting the Crimson Tide lineup this fall. But, Staley said, he's also giving players who have been in the program before plenty of opportunity to win a spot.

"We've got some talent," he said. "It will be a matter of whether we can stay healthy."

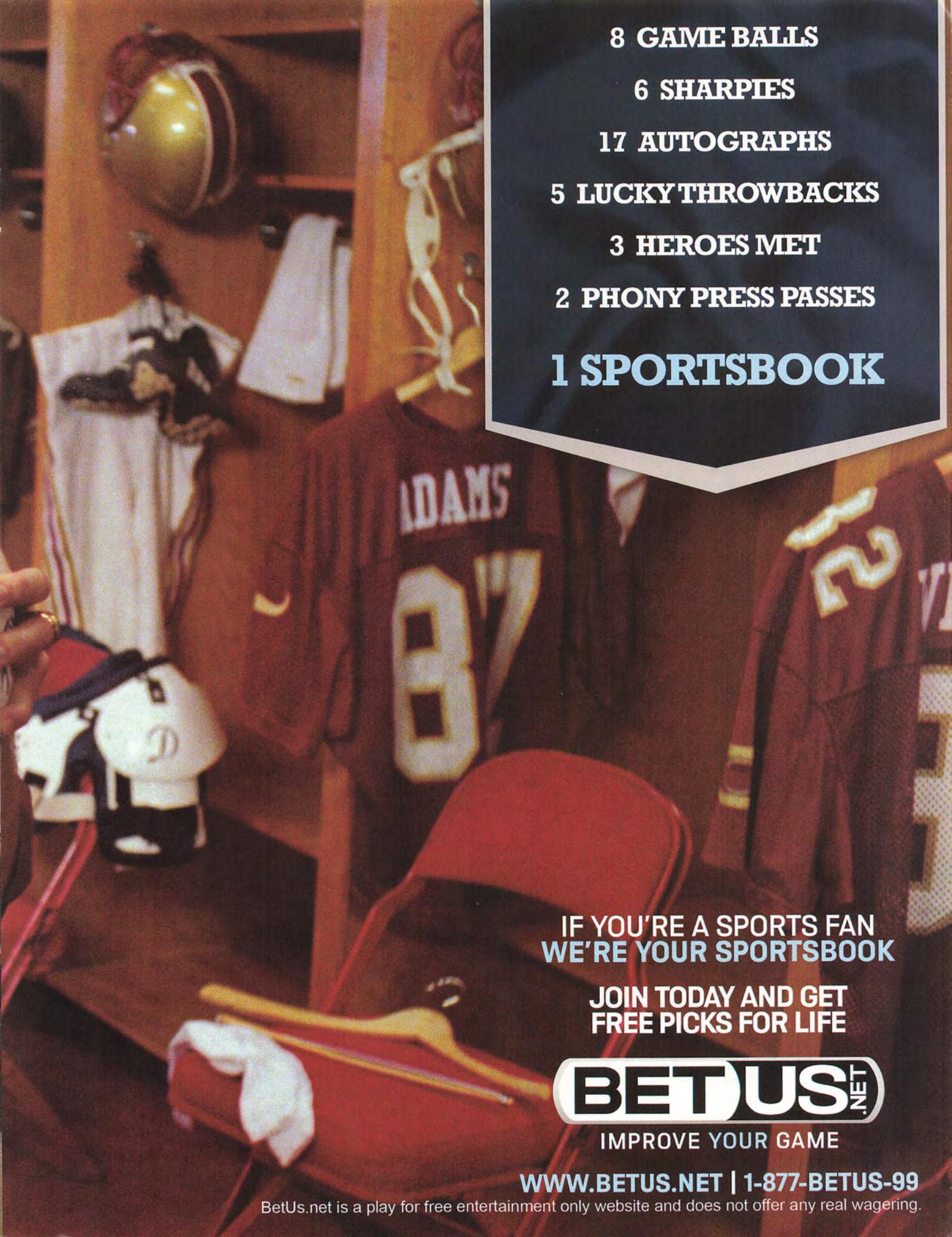
"What will start to appear to with creative players and assistant coaches who will blend with what you're doing and stay within the framework of the system."

The goalkeeper should be Kara Gudmens, who started 13 games a year ago for the Crimson Tide. ■

Don Staley





A collage of various sports memorabilia items, including a red baseball jersey with "ADAMS" and the number "8", a yellow baseball, a white football, and a green and white striped jersey. These items are arranged in a somewhat cluttered, celebratory manner.

8 GAME BALLS

6 SHARPIES

17 AUTOGRAPHS

5 LUCKY THROWBACKS

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CROSS COUNTRY OUTLOOK

After good 2005, things look better in 2006

The Alabama cross country teams are both coming off their best seasons of the last few and both are paced by strong corps of talent that return en masse for the upcoming season, promising bigger and better things in 2006.

On the men's side, it was a group of freshmen that took Alabama back to the NCAA Championships and all the way to a top-25 finish. Led by rookie Augustus Maiyo's 59th place individual finish at nationals, Alabama finished 21st, its highest team finish since taking 19th in 1997. Maiyo was named Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year as well as first team All-SEC and All-South Region.

Maiyo wasn't the only rookie on fire last year. Abraham Kutingala and Titus Koeh both earned All-SEC and All-South Region as freshman. Alex Korir, a senior this season, was also All-SEC and All-South Region last year.

"We're still in a very good position," Men's Head Coach Joe Walker said. "We return three guys who were All-SEC as freshmen and I've seen a progression there that I think will continue."

And of the five Tide runners to earn All-South Region last year, everyone is back with the exception of Peter Etoot who finished his cross country eligibility last year.

With a year under their belt, and after finishing second at last year's SEC Championships, the Tide's highest since 2002 and five places better than 2005, the group of Maiyo, Kutingala, Koeh and Korir should be prepared for even bigger things this season.

"If it all comes around like we think it will, I think we have a team that can contend for a league title," Walker said. "Arkansas lost two quality guys, but we know that they'll replace them and be a favorite, but I think we're right in there and will have a chance."

Maiyo will have a shot at and SEC title of his own after finishing second to departed Arkansas



University of Alabama senior Josphat Boit by less than two seconds last year.

"I think Augustus will be a threat to win the SEC as a sophomore," Walker said. "There's still a lot of talent in the league and there are seven, eight or nine guys who could win it, but I think he's right up there in the front. Abraham Kutingala is another guy who has come a long way and could be a factor right up in the front as well. Titus Koeh is another guy who had a great fall and I look for him to come back strong as well."

Walker is still looking to bring two student-athletes in the few days remaining before school starts. If everything goes as planned, those two latecomers will fill in for Etoot and Ian Rawlinson who in June unexpectedly decided not to return to school.

"We feel like with our core group of guys that we're very solid," Walker said. "At this point, we

just have to do a better job of solidifying our depth, those guys who are going to run six, seven and eight in our line-up."

To that end, Walker has five freshman already on board for the Fall including Emmanuel Bor, Justin Byrd, GJ Hudgens, Cameron Sherrill and Alex Siever. The Tide's returnees also include junior Frederick Cameron, Paul Guevara and Shawn Kays along with sophomore Brandon Stephens.

On the women's side, Coach Steve Keith's crew is also fueled by the return of a strong core group, but his nucleus is blessed with experience, made up of seniors and a redshirt junior. This foundation, led by senior Julia Hicks, has moved the Tide up through the ranks at the conference level during their careers, finishing eighth last season, its best showing since 2000. That finish has the Tide veterans hungry for a top-half finish to close out their career.

"They're a great group and you have to appreciate them when they come around because it doesn't happen that often," Keith said of his upperclassmen. "Of course we're looking for another group this year to replace these seniors once they graduate."

Hicks, who had a career year in 2005, is looking to close out her crimson and white tenure with first team All-SEC honors as well as an individual trip to the NCAA Championships. The Tide's top finisher in every race last season, Hicks was among the top-15 in every race last season, including the NCAA South Region Championships, where she earned all-region honors.

Once again joining Hicks in the scoring-five will be fellow seniors Megan Carnes and Elizabeth Wancowicz, redshirt junior Tara Enebak and freshman Katie Davis.

"They are obviously my first serious group and they developed nicely," Keith, in his sixth season,

said of his veterans. "I'm glad we have that extra year with Tara to kind of create a little bit of a cross over. There's a lot they can be proud of and hopefully this year they'll be able to finish off strong," Keith said.

Also returning for the Tide will be juniors Jen Gray and Lauren Lambert along with sophomores Megan Betts, Piper Broderick and Whitney Taylor. They will be joined by five rookies, including sophomore transfer Farrah Stewart, coming to the Tide from Troy, and freshmen Ashley Ard, Rue Chitwood, Anna Day and Rachel White.

With its entire scoring five returning from last season, the Tide will be able to build depth

through the season with an eye toward having eight to 10 solid runners by the time post-season rolls around. With 15 athletes on his roster, Keith has a solid base to go on.

With a veteran crew up front, Keith has built a schedule that will allow the Tide's to train through the season and really point toward the conference championships.

"The races this fall will be more for training leading up to SEC championship," Keith said. "We know what the races are at this point, so we're going to train right up until conference this season. I think I'd like to see them test themselves about

four weeks out from conference and then really get after it at conference."

The women once again get things started with the aptly named Belmont Opener on September 1, while the men get rolling a week later at the UTC Invitational on September 8. Both teams will be on hand to host the annual Crimson Classic held on the Harry Pritchett Golf Course on September 15. The conference championships will be October 28 in Baton Rouge; the NCAA South Regional is November 11 in Maryville, Tennessee; and the NCAA Championships will be in Terre Haute, Indiana, on November 20. ■



University of Alabama

RACK THE BATS

Baseball and softball have memorable seasons

In athletics, sometimes it's not what you win as much as what you keep from losing. For Alabama there were important winning and even more important loss-avoidance situations this spring.

When 2007 rolls around, Alabama will be defending Southeastern Conference championships in the most high-profile men's and women's spring sports. For only the second time in SEC history one school won both the baseball and softball championships.

And a strong case can be made that it is of greater importance that the Crimson Tide will have the same leaders of the programs in 2007 as it did last season. Bama Baseball Coach Jim Wells took a look at the LSU baseball program, where he got his start in college coaching, but decided he would remain with the Crimson Tide. Alabama Softball Coach Patrick Murphy turned down an offer from Oklahoma State.

As a courtesy, Wells, 51, met with LSU Athletics Director Skip Bertman, the Hall of Fame former baseball coach of the Tigers. After the meeting at the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska, Wells told Bertman and Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore that he would be staying at Bama, a program he has taken to national prominence during his 12-year tenure.

"My heart belongs to the Alabama Crimson Tide," Wells said. "We are staying here. That has been my main interest all along."

"I did want to meet with Coach Moore and [UA President] Dr. [Robert] Witt to discuss the future of our program in all areas, including academics, scholarships, and facilities. I felt Dr. Witt and Coach Moore were very helpful, and I look forward to working with them in the future."

Wells completed his 12th season at UA at the NCAA Super Regionals. He has compiled a 522-246 (.679) record at The Capstone, winning two SEC Championships (1996 and 2006) and three SEC Western Division titles (1996, 2002 and 2006). He



Jim Wells
University of Alabama



Patrick Murphy
University of Alabama

also leads all SEC coaches with six SEC Tournament titles (1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2003).

In addition, he has led the Crimson Tide to NCAA Tournament appearances in 10 of his 12 seasons, including six regional titles, two Super Regional berths and three trips to the College World Series. Alabama went 56-14 in 1997 and played in the national championship game at Omaha.

He led Alabama to a 44-21 record this season and the school's league-leading 14th SEC Championship. Bama had series wins against two nationally-ranked number one teams during the year, Mississippi State and South Carolina.

Oklahoma State wants to catch up to Oklahoma as a national powerhouse in softball, particularly since the Softball College World Series is held each year in Oklahoma City. And it's easy to understand why OSU would look to Bama's Patrick Murphy, who has made back-to-back appearances in the WCWS, and four trips in the past seven years. Under Murphy, Bama has made a meteoric

rise in college softball, among the nation's best with a program only a decade old.

The Alabama coaching staff was named the National Fastpitch Coaches Association South Region Coaching Staff of the Year. Murphy and assistant coaches Alyson Habetz and Vann Stuedeman led the Crimson Tide to a program best 25-4 SEC record while also rising as high as third in the country.

The award marks the third such honor for Murphy and his staff as they were named regional Coaching Staff of the Year in 2000 and 2003.

Bama did not receive a single vote to win the SEC title in a pre-season ballot of league coaches. But the Crimson Tide started the conference season with a 15-0 run and was a wire-to-wire league champion. Early season non-conference wins included a victory over defending national champion Michigan. Bama also had a three-game sweep of second-ranked Tennessee.

The Tide season ended at 54-11 when top-ranked UCLA eliminated Bama from the CWS.

It was the Tide's fourth 50-win season. Bama has made eight straight appearances in the NCAA Tournament, the longest streak in SEC history.

Players earned plenty of individual honors in 2006.

Wells called the 2006 Alabama baseball team the, "best group I believe we've ever had."

Three Tiders—junior left-handed pitcher Wade LeBlanc, junior center fielder Emeel Salem, and senior catcher Kody Valverde—reaped most of the honors, including All-America citations. Pitcher Tommy Hunter was a Freshman All-America honoree.

LeBlanc was 11-1 and set Alabama records for innings pitched (129 1/3) and strikeouts (129). He is the career strikeout leader with 334. He was SEC Pitcher of the Year.

Salem led UA with a .356 (101-for-284) average, with two home runs and 32 RBI from the leadoff spot in the order. Salem also led UA with 67 runs scored and 36 stolen bases this season. He ranked among the Bama single-season leaders in at-bats (2nd, 284), triples (3rd, 7), stolen bases (3rd, 36) and total hits (8th, 101). An All-SEC selection, Salem was also SEC Baseball Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

Valverde had his best season as he hit .347 (76-for-219) with 12 home runs and 59 RBI. He led the Crimson Tide in home runs and was second in hitting and RBI. He was named the Most Valuable Player at the 2006 NCAA Tuscaloosa Regional as he led the Crimson Tide to its sixth NCAA Regional championship with wins over Jacksonville State and Troy. He batted .714 (10-for-14) in the three games, with one double, one home run and eight RBI. Valverde hit a grand slam, the first of his career, in Bama's 13-1 win over Jax State in the opening round. His two-out, ninth inning single gave the Tide a 4-3 win in game two. He tied an Alabama single-game record with five hits in the 14-5 win over Troy in the championship game.

Hunter, who set Alabama records for wins and innings pitched by a freshman, had a 10-3 record and 3.30 ERA. He worked 117 1/3 innings and allowed 115 hits, 52 runs and 43 earned runs, with 22 walks and 80 strikeouts. He set the UA freshman single-season record with 10 wins, breaking the previous record of eight wins held by B.J. Green (1998), Scott Murphy (1999), Taylor Tankersley (2002) and Wade LeBlanc (2004). He also set the UA single-season record for innings pitched as he surpassed the previous record of 112 1/3 innings held by Wade LeBlanc in 2004. He was a three-time SEC Freshman of the Week.

In softball, Crimson Tide senior pitcher Stephanie VanBrakle and freshman outfielder

Brittany Rogers were named All-America.

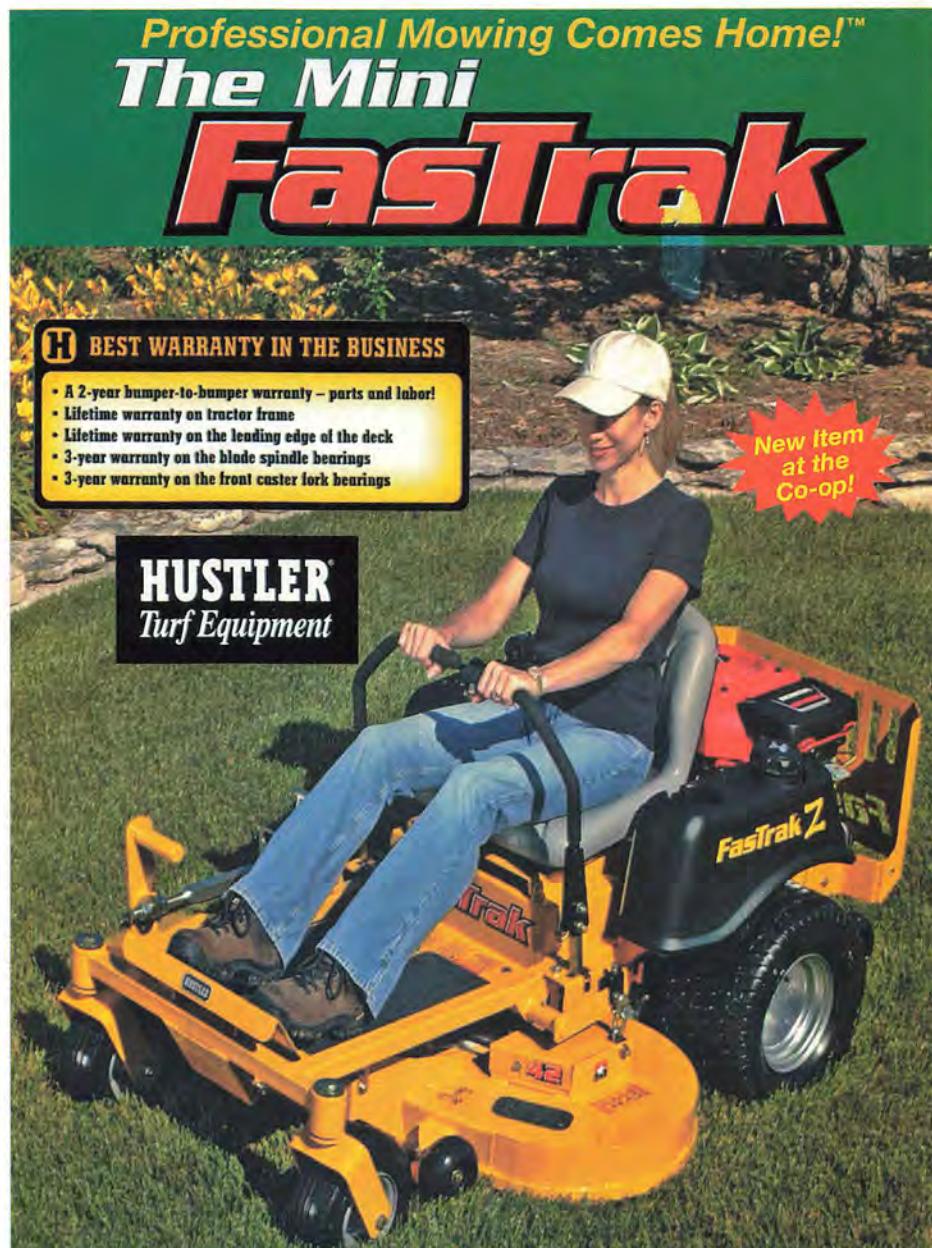
VanBrakle, who was also SEC Pitcher of the Year, had a 28-6 record with a 1.19 ERA. She broke her previous record of 341 strikeouts with 345 and had a perfect game and three other no-hitters. She is a two-time All-America honoree.

Rogers led the Crimson Tide and the SEC in hitting with a .434 average, 60 runs scored and 38 stolen bases. She joins Kelly Kretschman (1998),

Jackie McClain (2001) and Ashley Courtney (2002) as the only players in Alabama softball history to be named All-America as freshmen. Rogers was the SEC Freshman of the Year.

Seven Tiders were named to various All-SEC teams: VanBrakle, Rogers, Staci Ramsey and Jordan Praytor first team, Ashley Holcombe and Dani Woods second team. Rogers and Kelley Montalvo were Freshman All-SEC. ■

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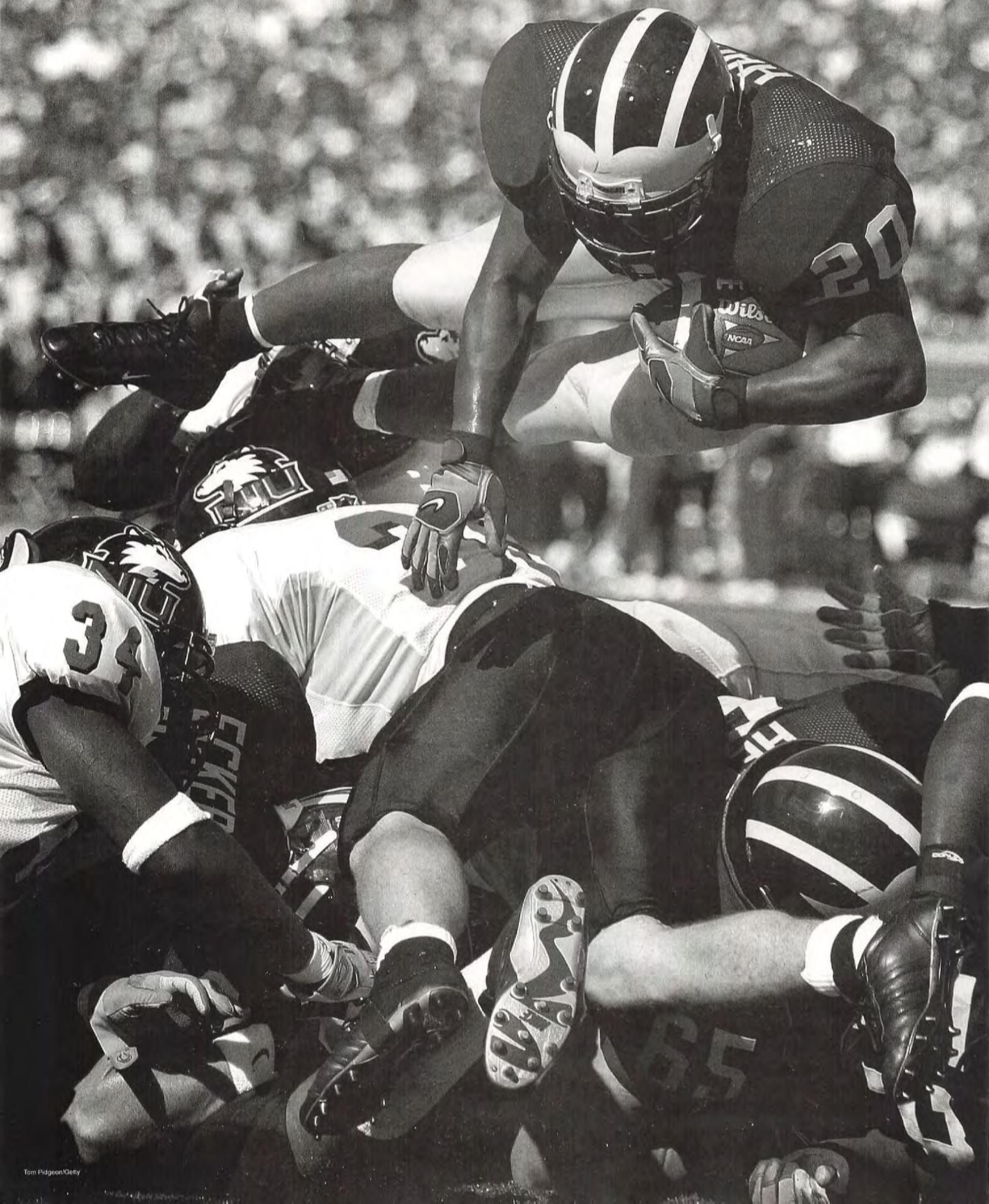
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MORE MONEY BY THE DOZEN

College football officially welcomes the 12-game regular-season schedule

scout.com

In a few weeks, summer will yield to fall as September arrives, and with it the start of another college football season. Over Labor Day weekend, fans will gather at the venue of their choice, places like the Big House, The Swamp and Death Valley. Stands will be full, tickets scarce and optimism high. For one week, everyone is undefeated.

Rarely has college football been more popular, particularly among the tradition-rich programs. A tip of the hat goes to Michigan, which won its eighth consecutive attendance title in 2005, averaging 110,915 fans during its seven home games. Even though Tennessee hobbled through its worst season since 1988, an average of 107,593 Rocky Toppers stopped by Neyland Stadium last fall.

Not far behind were Ohio State (105,017), Penn State (104,859), Georgia (92,701), Louisiana State (91,580), Southern California (90,812), Florida (90,406), Oklahoma (84,331) and Auburn (84,161).

The national attendance average for Division I-A surpassed 46,000. Nearly 50 schools matched that. The top 20 averaged more than 75,000.

PLAY IT AND THEY WILL PAY.

College football fans will now get another chance to be true to their school. The NCAA has added a 12th game to the regular-season schedule. Traditionally college football seasons featured 11 regular-season games. The only exception came when the calendar allowed for 14 Saturdays from early September through November. Now I-A schools have the option of playing one more game with one less bye week.



Streeter Lecka/Getty

**MORE GAMES. MORE FANS.
MORE MONEY.**

"Give Tennessee one more regular-season game, and I guarantee you it will be played in Knoxville," said Dan Fulks, author of *Revenue and Expenses in Division I and II Intercollegiate Athletics*. "It will be a body-bag game, with a \$500,000 guarantee going to Louisiana Monroe or Chattanooga. Sell 105,000 seats at \$40 and give away \$500,000. Sweet."

There are plenty of critics of the 12th game, many saying it will put undue stress on the players, that the season is long enough as is. Eric Hyman

said he didn't favor the extra game when he was athletic director at Texas Christian, but now that he's at South Carolina, where fans went bonkers over Steve Spurrier's first season, he has adopted a more pragmatic stance, particularly when he considers the revenue potential.

"It's phenomenal," Hyman said. "There are so many expenses (for an athletic department) across the board. A lot of the sports don't bring in revenue. It's hard. If you look at your revenue sources, you have a ceiling of how much revenue you can generate."

Home teams can count on millions from the additional game. Nebraska makes about \$3 million for its athletic department each home game. Not everyone, of course, can count on that kind of coin, but many schools from BCS leagues will net at least a million or two from one more game. West Virginia, which has a 60,000-seat stadium, reportedly nets in the neighborhood of \$1.8 million from ticket revenue alone from home games.

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith admits the addition of the 12th game was driven by money, but noted that the players would be practicing much of their bye week during an 11-game season. Another game, at least, provides motivation.

"Not everyone goes to a bowl game," Smith told *The NCAA News*. "And the reality is kids would rather play than practice. Football has only 12 games. Put that in relation to the practice schedule. The thought that the decision simply takes advantage of the players is just a perception—the players want to play. If athletics were subsidized differently and the decision wasn't about money, I

would have still advocated the 12th game, because the players want to play it."

Traditionally, football season starts Labor Day weekend and runs through the end of November. That usually means 13 or 14 weeks, depending on how the calendar falls.

Even the mathematically challenged can recognize the potential problem—one more game, one less Saturday.

**MORE PRACTICES.
MORE MEETINGS.
MORE TRAVEL.
MORE STRESS.**

"They make it more difficult on football players every year," Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville said.

Tuberville accepts that college football is a business, but wonders when the powers that be will re-invest in their product.

"But it's about the money," Tuberville said. "That's what it's all about. We obviously raise most of the money. At all universities, football is one of the few sports that does make money, so they take advantage of it, athletic directors and presidents. But if you're going to do that, give something back to the players. In my nearly 20 years in the business it seems like we're always giving instead of getting back."

Previously, Division I-A teams had two off weeks to complete an 11-game regular season. Now they have just one open date, a sacrifice that many coaches say may lead to more injuries. More aches and pains may force the top football programs to curb redshirting. More freshmen could play, not because they want to, but because they may have to, to give the starters a chance to heal.

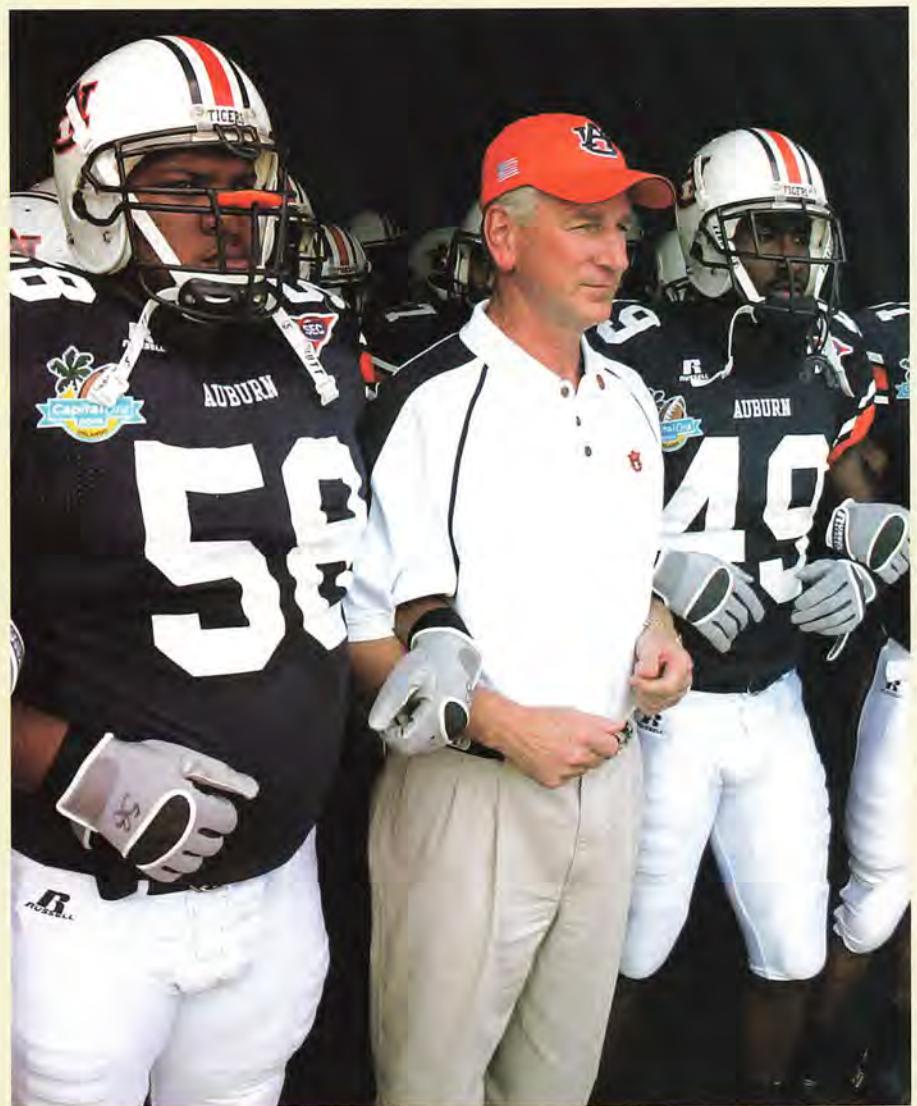
"I think more guys are going to have to play," Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer said. "With 12 games, you're going to have more injuries. You're going to have one less open date in most cases."

"Consequently everybody on your team—your 85-man roster, including walk-ons, 100-plus guys, have to be part of the equation. If they aren't, you're going to be fortunate to make it through the season with the guys that start the season. You're looking at 12. Really, everybody is hoping for 13, 14 games."

Typically, most freshmen redshirt, the theory being that many 17- and 18-year-olds are not physically strong enough to compete at the major college level, so why not give them a year to mature? So much for that learning curve.

"They may have to play, anyway," Georgia coach Mark Richt said.

Florida's starting receivers suffered an assortment of injuries last fall. So desperate was



Doug Benc/Getty

"But it's about the money. That's what it's all about. We obviously raise most of the money. At all universities, football is one of the few sports that does make money, so they take advantage of it, athletic directors and presidents. But if you're going to do that, give something back to the players. In my nearly 20 years in the business it seems like we're always giving instead of getting back."

— Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville

the Gator coaching staff, it considered playing freshman wideout David Nelson, who had planned on redshirting, but eventually coach Urban Meyer decided not to burn a year of eligibility.

This year Meyer may not have a choice, particularly if Florida reaches the SEC championship game, an accomplishment that would ensure a 13-game regular season.

"I've taken a different approach this year," Meyer said. "I think I know these kids coming in. I don't see us redshirting. I see us playing a bunch of guys, more than half."

One more game will mean more dollars, and in most cases, more mismatches, as elite programs scramble to fill the extra spot on their schedule with September roadkill.

Among the early forgettable non-conference matchups fans will see this fall: Miami-Florida A&M, Virginia Tech-Northeastern, Penn State-Youngstown State and Nebraska-Nicholls State.

Athletic directors, by nature, are pragmatists, who tweak and tinker toward one ultimate goal: the bottom line. The 12th game provides a timely revenue stream. They're known as guarantee games. The home team is guaranteed a victory; the visiting team is usually guaranteed \$500,000. The fans are guaranteed a bout of narcolepsy.

"It's not an easy situation," Michigan coach Lloyd Carr said. "There are number of schools that are dropping down a division for the 12th game. I mean there are a lot of them. I think when you look at, for example, Michigan, Oklahoma, people have pointed out we played the two most difficult schedules in the country. The more difficult schedule you play, the more difficult it is to get to that one BCS championship game."

"So scheduling, I always said this, Bear Bryant said when you look at his scheduling when he won those championship games, he always pointed to the importance of scheduling. I don't think that's changed at all. I think that's an important part of getting to that BCS game."

Michigan, one of the nation's elite public universities, chose a new opponent with similar academic standards. The Wolverines will host SEC foe Vanderbilt for their 2006 season opener.

Others, however, choose to soften their early schedule with low level I-A and I-AA programs. The SEC, Big 12 and Atlantic Coast Conference all have conference championship games, meaning the best teams out of those leagues will play another quality opponent at a neutral site.

The Big Ten and Pac-10 do not have conference championships, a big reason Texas coach Mack Brown and Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops are against

the 12th regular-season game. One of them likely will play 14 games, when you include a conference championship and a bowl.

SOMETHING HAS TO GIVE.

"I'd be in favor (of the 12th game), if they'd forgo the Big 12 championship game," Stoops said. "In our league, I think what you look at we count on playing 12 games and I'd say that in a humble way, but those are our expectations."

In fact, the Big 12 considered adding a regular-season conference game, but that idea never mustered enough support for league-wide approval.

Meanwhile, the Pac-10 added a ninth conference game and adopted a round-robin format. Some teams will have five conference home games; others four. It will mark the first time since 1977 that the league has had a round-robin format, eliminating the chance that two teams that did not play could tie for the conference title and the league's automatic BCS bid.

"We wanted a true conference champion," former Cal associate athletic director Dan Coonan said during an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "We didn't want to lose out going to the Rose Bowl because we played a tougher schedule than someone else played."

Florida, which aims to make its first SEC championship game since 2000, will play Western Carolina as an additional non-conference game this fall, but the out-of-league sex appeal improves dramatically in 2008 and 2013 when rival Miami pops on the schedule.

"When the NCAA added the 12th game, we wanted to look for years where there was a 14-week window to the season to give us flexibility in picking a date for the series," UF athletic director Jeremy Foley said. "In every other year, there are just 13 weeks to play 12 games, giving you less flexibility to schedule games and opponents."

The Hurricanes were a regular non-conference opponent for the Gators in the 1970s and '80s, but were dropped when the SEC added a seventh game to its conference schedule in the late '80s.

Florida has played UM four times—twice during the regular season and once each in the Sugar and Peach Bowl—since 2000. The Gators, 25-28 all time against the Canes, have lost six straight to their in-state rival.

"I have great respect for the tradition of the Miami football program," Meyer said.

"These games will be another great challenge for our football team."

Rarely do teams want to schedule more than one difficult non-conference game. Florida State,

a road warrior as an independent in the '70s and '80s when it routinely played the best of the best, will play state rivals Miami and Florida, but has balanced those two with Troy and Rice.

Clemson plays Florida Atlantic, Louisiana Tech and Temple, along with rival South Carolina. The Tigers play in the ACC, which added Virginia Tech, Miami and Boston College over the last few years. Miami won the national title in 2001. Virginia Tech played for the title in 1999. Boston College, though a not factor in recent national championship chases, won five straight bowl games from 2000-04.

"The ACC is not the ACC of the 1980s," Clemson athletic director Terry Don Phillips noted in his school's internet column.

Clemson, like many Division I-A schools, wants seven home games a year. Eight ACC games are assured, leaving four non-conference openings. Ideally, coach Tommy Bowden said he wants two pushovers and two powerhouses.

The problem is, every school has a different scheduling philosophy, so finding compatible interests can be challenging. Think scheduling 12 games is hard? How about 13, which Louisiana Tech will play this year because the Western Athletic Conference school travels to Hawaii this fall and has been granted yet another regular-season game by the NCAA.

"This will give us new opportunities for scheduling," Louisiana Tech athletic director Jim Oakes said. "I have more perspective on it than others. Until 2001, we were an independent. When I hear people complain about scheduling, I laugh. Try scheduling 11 games. It's a challenge. You have to work at it."

Even more popular is I-AA Western Carolina, a small Southern Conference school nestled in the heart of the Smoky Mountains. The Catamounts, who will visit Gainesville in November, also received overtures from Alabama and Georgia since the NCAA now allows Division I-A schools to count I-AA victories toward bowl eligibility every year, a practice previously allowed once every four years.

"One, it gives us an opportunity to play more I-A games," Western Carolina athletic director Chip Smith said. "Our players like it. Our coaches like it because of recruiting, and it helps us financially."

With 12 games on the way, could 13 be too far behind? With 13, then why not have a college football playoff? Is that the next logical step?

Michigan's Carr believes "we've just gone down that road."

"How soon will that be, I don't know," Carr said. "But I think that's inevitable. Whether it happens in my lifetime remains to be seen." ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

From bat boy to AD, Ingram has left mark on UA

In the 1940s, he was a bat boy and an unofficial manager. In the 1950s, he intercepted passes and turned double plays. In the 1960s and 1970s, he helped raise a son who starred on the golf team. In the 1990s, he brought aboard the man who brought home a 12th national championship. And today, the baseball coach he hired is still winning big.

If The University of Alabama handed out lifetime achievement awards—similar to the ones given during the Oscars — Cecil “Hootie” Ingram would be a shoo-in recipient.

Today, the 72-year-old Ingram—who acquired the nickname “Hootie” in second grade when a classmate, who knew of another Cecil nicknamed “Hootie,” assumed that all Cecils carried the nickname “Hootie”—is finally able to catch his breath, enjoying retirement life with wife, Toni, in their hometown of Tuscaloosa. The couple, married for 52 years, have three grown children—Robin, former UA golf standout Cecil, Jr., and Lane—six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. When he’s not spending time with family, Ingram dabbles in a couple of small business ventures which he said takes up very little of his time, travels around the country with his wife, and involves himself in local church work.

“I do a lot more with the church now,” said the former All-Southeastern Conference defensive back, who served as athletics director at his alma mater from 1989 to 1996. “I was what you’d call a poor church member during my working days. I didn’t always utilize my time like I should have back then.”

As he’s done his entire life, Ingram still follows Alabama athletics, too—minus all the sweat that comes with being an athlete and all the pressure that comes with being the athletics director.

“I try not to get nosy, but I do keep up with it,” he said.

He likes what he’s seen recently, particularly all the improvements in the facilities, lauding the jobs done by current athletics director Mal Moore

and UA president Robert Witt. The climate at The University during the early 1990s, according to Ingram, wasn’t as conducive as it is now for accomplishing goals.

“It was different when I came,” he said. “There was a lot of unrest—more so than I thought when I took the job. What I tried to do was get people to cheer the team on rather than complain about what’s going on. I did the best I could without running people off. I tried to take control and mold everything together. I did it to a degree.”

Having a steady influence like Stallings heading the football program was a big help.

“He was very organized and mature enough not to be bothered by the fussing going on,” Ingram said of Stallings. “The big thing when I was athletics director was that I didn’t realize the many different factions we had.”

Despite the lack of oneness at The University, Ingram was still able to produce some noteworthy accomplishments. He oversaw a major renovation of Bryant-Denny Stadium’s foundation and structure, which allowed for the expansion work that would come later. He also made two key hires—Stallings as head football coach and Jim Wells as head baseball coach.

Ingram first met Stallings in 1958 when Stallings was an assistant on Coach Paul Bryant’s first staff and Ingram was a high school coach at nearby Brookwood High School. The two remained in contact over the years.

Decades later, Ingram, having been on the job as Alabama AD less than six months, found himself facing the ultimate task—hiring a new head football coach at Alabama. Stallings had recently been let go as the Phoenix Cardinals head football coach and was considering an offer to coach at the Naval Academy. Ingram believed Stallings was the right man for the job despite skeptics who viewed Stallings’ losing record as a head coach as a red flag.

Ingram and University President Roger Sayers flew to Paris, Texas, to visit with Stallings and his wife, Ruth Ann.

“I mainly wanted Dr. Sayers to meet Coach Stallings,” Ingram said. “He had never met him before. Of course, I had known Coach Stallings for quite a while.”

The visit went well and Alabama had its new football coach.

“I would have never had the opportunity to coach at Alabama if it hadn’t been for Hootie,” Stallings said. “I’m deeply indebted to him, and I thought he did a great job as athletics director. It saddened me when he was no longer athletics director at Alabama. He was always extremely fair to me while we were there together.”

Ingram was also extremely loyal to Stallings, something that didn’t go unnoticed by the head coach.

“I still remember one of the things he said that meant so much to me,” Stallings said. “When I started coaching at Alabama in 1990 we started off 0-3. Questions started to come up whether or not I was really the right person to be Alabama’s head coach. I needed a little support at that time but I didn’t want to ask for it. But Hootie spoke up anyway and told everybody he’d rather have me as head coach with an 0-3 record rather than some other coach with a 3-0 record. He really went out on a limb by saying that because we could have ended up going 0-6 or 0-7. But that statement he made told me the kind of person he was.”

Ingram and Wells, on the other hand, didn’t have a prior long-standing friendship. But it didn’t take long for Ingram to gain an enormous amount of respect for the Louisiana native. Wells had been the head coach at Northwestern State and before that was an assistant on Skip Bertman’s staff at LSU.

“Steve Townsend (former associate athletics director) recommended Wells to me,” Ingram said.

"LSU also recommended some other guys at schools like Louisiana Tech and Southwestern Louisiana, but when I visited with Coach Wells I liked him. He's a baseball man who isn't interested in glamour. Plus, he was a great family man. So that was an easy hire for me. He really wanted to come to Alabama. He wanted to coach at this level and he took full advantage of his opportunity. He won immediately and consistently."

One of Ingram's toughest challenges during his tenure was dealing with an NCAA investigation and the ensuing sanctions. Part of the problem regarding the whole ordeal had to do with confusion over which governing body—the SEC or the NCAA—to report infractions to.

"You didn't know whether to tell Peter or Paul," explained Ingram, who incidentally served as assistant commissioner of the SEC in the 1970s. "It just got off to some bad footing between the conference office and the NCAA. There was a lot of stuff that was misunderstood."

Couple that with the fact that Alabama was being specifically targeted by envious outsiders and it was almost inevitable that the Tide was in for a fall.

"There were some people who were tired of hearing that Alabama had never been on probation, and there were some people who wanted that to change," Ingram said. "And there were some people sitting in the right chairs to do that."

Ingram admits some mistakes were made, but the whole episode was blown out of proportion and not handled correctly by the governing bodies.

"In years past, a case like ours would have simply been thrown out," he said. "A university wasn't punished for something they hadn't been told about beforehand ... During my tenure, no one acted dishonestly or blatantly did anything wrong, and that's what made it a hard pill to swallow. Without question, the punishment was not equal to the crime."

Overall, Ingram found his experience as Alabama's athletics director to be rewarding. Not only did he have the opportunity to work with some solid individuals like Sayers and Stallings, he got to do so at a place he was extremely familiar with and a place that was close to his heart. Before he was even a student at The University, he played at what was then known as Denny Field as a Tuscaloosa High School football player, served as the bat boy for the Tide's baseball team and did some managerial type work for the Tide football team.

Then came a stellar career at The Capstone as a member of the Crimson Tide.

"I get reminded of my playing days at Alabama every August and September when I hear the weatherman say, 'And today was the hottest day of the year since 1952,' which is when I was going through two-a-days," said Ingram, who got plenty of sun in the spring, too, playing second base for Bama's baseball team.

As a sophomore in 1952, Ingram turned in one of the finest seasons ever by an Alabama defensive back. In 11 regular season games, he picked off 10 passes, which led the nation that year and remains an Alabama record to this day. He had another interception in Alabama's 61-6 thrashing

Alabama went 6-2-3 during the regular season in 1953, won the SEC and met Rice in the 1954 Cotton Bowl. Ingram wasn't able to play his usual defensive back position that game because back-up quarterback Albert Elmore was recovering from injuries sustained in a car accident, bumping Ingram up to number two quarterback behind starter Bart Starr. It was deemed too risky to let Ingram play defense that day.

Ingram and the Tide finished a disappointing 4-5-2 in 1954 as the team continued to struggle to score points.

After finishing his career at Alabama, Ingram had a brief stint in the Army before beginning his coaching career at Bradenton (Florida) Manatee High School. The following year he accepted the head coaching job at Brookwood. In 1960, he began his college coaching career as an assistant at Wake Forest. From there he served on the staffs at Virginia Tech, Georgia and Arkansas before accepting his first collegiate head coaching job at Clemson in 1970. He stayed there for three years before moving into the SEC office as an administrator.

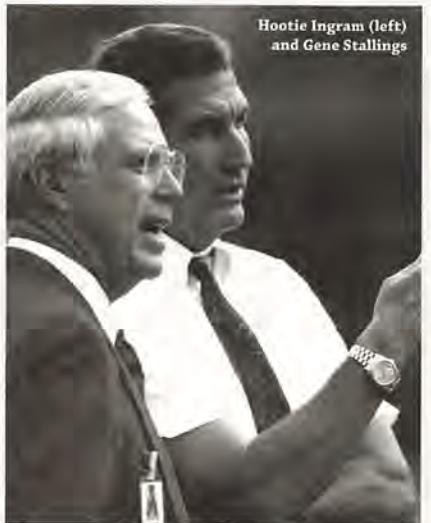
After eight years in the SEC office, Ingram became Florida State's athletics director in 1980 and while there led a \$10 million dollar effort to upgrade facilities. His next stop was his alma mater.

Upon leaving Alabama in 1996, Ingram accepted an offer from the chancellor from the state of Florida to help Florida Atlantic University and Florida International University start football programs. In 2000, he was color analyst for College Sports Southeast's replay broadcasts of Clemson football games but gave that up after one season.

After the numerous roles Ingram has had related to Alabama athletics since the 1940s, he's managed to add one more in recent years—tunnel-visioned spectator. Ingram, a member of both the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame and the Orange Bowl Hall of Fame, tries to attend as many home football games as possible now that he's retired.

"I'd rather sit alone in the stands and concentrate on the game," he said. "I don't like to go for the social aspect of it. I just try to find a secluded place and enjoy the game."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hootie Ingram is one of 62 former Alabama football players who tells his story of "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide," with foreword by Gene Stallings. 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair is author of the book, which is available for \$27.95 plus tax (if applicable) and shipping and handling by calling (205) 345-5074. Autograph by Kirk McNair is available.



of Syracuse in the Orange Bowl to go along with an 80-yard punt return for a score that remained an Orange Bowl record until it was broken in 2006.

"As far as intercepting passes, I just knew where the ball was going, I could think fast and I had good reactions," Ingram said. "The other thing I could do was catch and return punts. I can't remember every letting a punt hit the ground. That's one of my pet peeves now—watching a punt returner let the ball hit the ground and roll. You're giving up a couple of first downs right there."

After the 1952 season, the NCAA did away with two-platoon football, forcing teams to keep the same players on the field for both offense and defense. In most cases, teams opted to keep their defensive players on the field. The result was some poor offensive showings across the country in 1953.

"I liked it because it gave me a chance to play some offense, but it was not good for the game," said Ingram, who lined up at left halfback and served as the team's third-string quarterback when playing offense. "It was horrible football."

GONE PRO

Tide has a large alumni base in NFL football

In April Alabama added five more players to the ranks of Crimson Tide alumni in professional football via the NFL Amateur Draft, and two more former Bama players signed free agent contracts giving them their first shots with NFL teams.

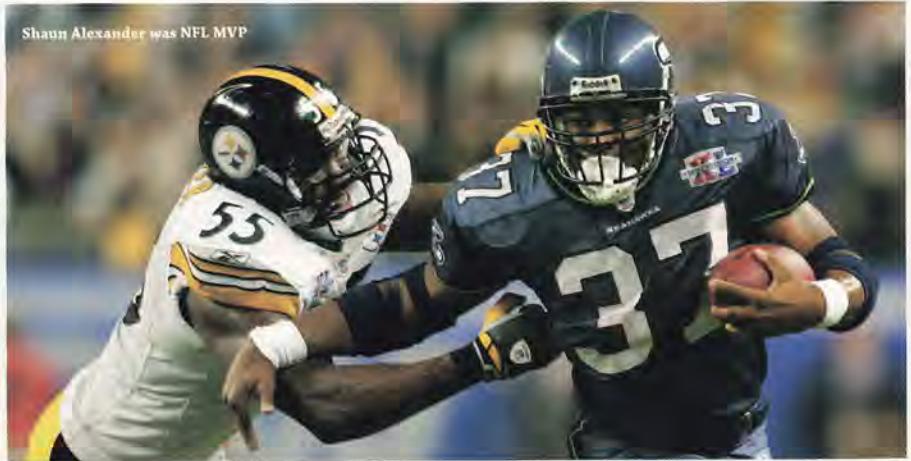
Linebacker DeMeco Ryans was the 33rd overall pick, the second round selection of the Houston Texans. He signed with the Texans in July and his first game action is expected on August 12 when the Texans host the Kansas City Chiefs.

Ten selections after Ryans became the first Tide player drafted in 2006, defensive back Roman Harper was drafted by the New Orleans Saints with the 43rd overall pick. Harper roomed with USC first round draft pick Reggie Bush at the Saints mini camp. Brodie Croyle was the third round pick of the Kansas City Chiefs (85th overall pick) and received rave reviews after his mini camp performance. Charlie Peprah and Mark Anderson were back-to-back picks in the fifth round of the draft. Peprah, a safety, was picked up by the New York Giants (158th overall pick) and Anderson, a defensive end, went next to the Chicago Bears.

Freddie Roach signed as an undrafted free agent with the Patriots and attended mini camp there with hopes of making the squad. Anthony Madison was signed by the Pittsburgh Steelers, and he has said his odds of making the team are good. Former running back Ray Hudson was undrafted last year as he recovered from a knee injury during his senior year, but he signed a free agent deal with the Saints, where he will compete with Bush, among others, for a spot on the roster.

The most prominent Alabama alumnus in the pro football ranks is current Seahawks running back and two-time pro-bowler Shaun Alexander. Alexander is the all-time career rushing leader at Alabama, and he led Seattle to the Super Bowl this past season.

The summer is a time of heavy amounts of jostling on professional football rosters, and the former Crimson Tide players are subject to being



Jonathan Ferrey/Getty

added, traded or released at any time.

What follows is a list of Alabama players and their NFL teams. This snapshot lists Bama players, their position and current team, with years at Alabama in parenthesis.

Shaun Alexander, RB, Seattle Seahawks (1996-99). Mark Anderson, DE, Chicago Bears (2002-05). Wesley Britt, OT, New England Patriots (2001-04). Anthony Bryant, DT, Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2001-04). Fernando Bryant, CB, Detroit Lions (1995-98). Brodie Croyle, QB, Kansas City Chiefs (2002-05). Shawn Draper, OL, Atlanta Falcons (1997-2000). Cornelius Griffin, DT, Washington Redskins (1998-99). Patrick Hape, TE, Houston Texans (1993-96). Roman Harper, S, New Orleans Saints (2002-05). Atlas Herrian, OL, Cleveland Browns (assigned to NFL Europe), (2001-03). Ray Hudson, RB, New Orleans Saints (2001-04). Jarret Johnson, DT, Baltimore Ravens, (1999-2002). Terry Jones, Jr., TE, San Francisco 49ers, (1998-2001). Kenny King, DT, Arizona Cardinals, (1999-2002). Triandos Luke, WR, New York Giants, (2000-03). Jason McAddley, WR, San Francisco 49ers, (1998-2001). Anthony Madison, CB, Pittsburgh Steelers (2002-05). Evan Mathis, OL, Carolina Panthers, (2001-04). Kindal Moorehead, DE, Carolina Panthers, (1998-2002). Michael Myers,

DT, Denver Broncos, (1996). Antwan Odom, DE, Tennessee Titans (2000-03). Charlie Peprah, DB, New York Giants, (2002-05). Derrick Pope, LB, Miami Dolphins, (2002-03). Saleem Rasheed, LB, San Francisco 49ers, (1999-2001). Freddie Roach, LB, New England Patriots, (2002-05). DeMeco Ryans, LB, Houston Texans, (2002-05). Chris Samuels, OT, Washington Redskins, (1996-99). Justin Smiley, OG, San Francisco 49ers, (2001-03). Deshea Townsend, CB, Pittsburgh Steelers, (1994-97). Cornelius Wortham, LB, Seattle Seahawks, (2000-04). Shaud Williams, RB, Buffalo Bills, (2002-03).

Former Bama defensive back Tony Dixon, recently of the Dallas Cowboys, and offensive lineman Alonzo Ephraim, who played for the Eagles, were unrestricted free agents at the time of this writing.

Gerald Dixon, a former Bama cornerback, and Nautyn McKay-Loescher, a defensive end, were listed on rosters of the Canadian Football League. Dixon is in his second year with the Edmonton Eskimos, while McKay-Loescher is a member of the British Columbia Lions. Dixon was back in Alabama during the past off-season working toward his college degree. Former Bama defensive end Todd Bates was signed by the Cologne Centurions of NFL Europe. ■

'BAMA SCORECARD

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

Moving Back

Beginning in 2007, the Alabama-Auburn football game will once again take place in the last week of November. Since 1993, the game has been played the weekend before Thanksgiving, in theory to give a team participating in the Southeastern Conference Championship game an off-week to prepare.

With the move to a 12-game schedule beginning this year, there is only one open week in college football. The Southeastern Conference has decided to require every SEC team play a conference game during the final week of the season.

All SEC teams playing that final weekend eliminates the possibility that one team in the championship game would have the advantage of having had an open date while the other team had played a game the week before.

"I think it's good and the proposal had overwhelming support in the SEC," Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore said. "It's good for the players. We're playing 12 games now and this year we play for 12 straight weeks. By moving the Auburn game to the final week we'll be able to fit in an open date somewhere in the season."

Moore said it was unlikely that Alabama would have its open date the week before the Auburn game. He sees that by coming closer to the middle of the season. And, he said, he hopes that perhaps the NCAA will allow schools to begin the season a week earlier so that a team could have two open dates during the season.

What a Year!

The 2005-06 academic year was one of the best in recent memory for all Crimson Tide sports programs, and the Alabama athletics department earned more national distinction when the school earned a 21st-place finish in the U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup rankings. It was Alabama's best finish in the Cup standings since 1997, when UA tallied an 18th-place ranking for its overall athletics program.

Alabama has finished in the top 30 six times since 1994 and has been in the nation's top 20 three times. The Tide earned 15th-place finishes in 1994 and 1995 and an 18th-place finish in 1997. Alabama moved up 17 spots from 2004-05, when UA placed 38th in the Directors' Cup standings.

"I think this is evidence that we are beginning to see the effects of our facilities upgrade over the last few years and the positive factor that has played in our recruiting efforts," Moore said. "Ultimately, our goal at Alabama is to win championships and to be a source of pride for our fans and alumni."

The SEC did well in the 2005-06 Directors' Cup, with four schools joining Alabama in the top 30. Florida finished fifth, Georgia was ninth, Tennessee placed 14th and LSU earned 20th place.

Million Dollar Gift

The UA athletics department has made a \$1 million donation to The University's "Our Students, Our Future" campaign, a \$500 million fundraising effort by The University. Athletics Director Mal Moore cited excellent ticket sales and other revenue streams in 2005-06, and a larger-than-expected share of SEC funds, when he announced the donation.

Moore pointed out that while all the sports selling tickets did not make a profit (only football and men's basketball do that), that other sports—baseball, softball and gymnastics—had generated greater revenue than usual for the department. Alabama was one of only six schools in the nation to have its football team in a bowl game, its men's basketball team in the NCAA Tournament and its baseball team in the

NCAA Tournament, contributing factors in the successful financial year.

Moore said, "When we were in a tough spot a few years ago, our students stood behind us, as did our alumni. And so we are proud to be a part of this \$500 million campaign and to make this gift."

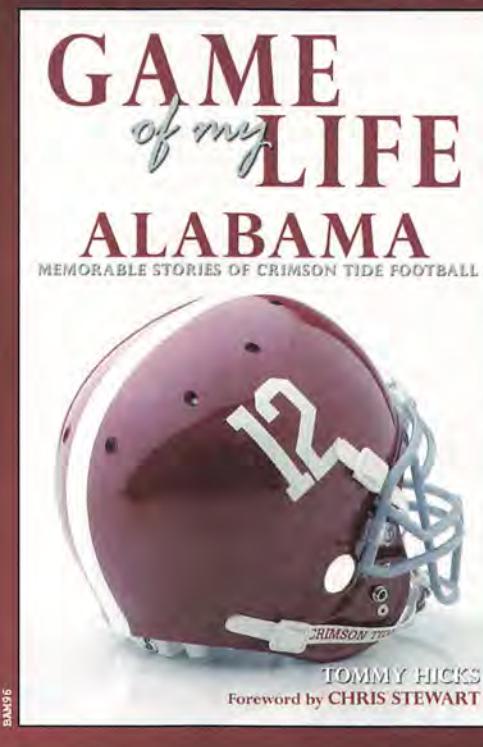
There is a history of the athletics department supporting the academics side of The University, going back to Paul Bryant as director of athletics making substantial donations.

Moore said this is not necessarily a one-time gift, but it is also not necessarily possible that the athletics department will be in a position to make a gift every year.

The "Our Students, Our Future" campaign's \$500 million goal includes \$250 million for student scholarships. The remaining funds will be used for faculty

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support, facilities, and priority needs. The campaign has raised more than \$299 million since 2002.

University President Dr. Robert E. Witt expressed his appreciation for the donation. He said, "These scholarship funds will fuel our momentum in becoming a 'university of choice' for the best and brightest students."

He noted that The University had received over 10,000 applications for freshman enrollment prior to the 2005-06 year and that more than 12,000 have applied for freshman enrollment this year.

The president pointed out that the athletics department has been important to the "Our Students, Our Future" campaign other than with its \$1 million donation. Dr. Witt said that athletics keeps the name of The University of Alabama in front of the public. And, he said, athletics is the bond of alumni. He said those factors were important in Alabama being 60 per cent to the \$500 million goal before it was ever announced to the public.

Request Denied

The NCAA has officially denied a request for a fifth year of eligibility for Alabama basketball player Chuck Davis.

"His appeal has been denied," Alabama Head Coach Mark Gottfried said. "We felt with circumstances happened in his family to apply to try to get a fifth year, and I thought it was the right thing to do."

"I read somewhere where (someone wrote)

he was trying to get a sixth year and that wasn't accurate. Just a fifth year. I thought it was the right thing. He was a graduate in three-and-a-half years. He's done everything the way it should be done within the NCAA and I thought it would really benefit him personally for the rest of his life. But that has been denied."

Adopted Tider

Trey Waldrep, the son of former TCU running back Kent Waldrep, recently became the first offspring of a non-Alabama athlete to receive a Paul Bryant Scholarship. The elder Waldrep suffered a broken neck and was permanently paralyzed in a game against Alabama in 1974. He and the famed Alabama coach became close friends, and remained so until Bryant's death nine years later. Coach Bryant founded the scholarship program for children of former players and coaches and the program is now administered by Paul Bryant, Jr.

Former UA Players Promoted

Alabama added two more players to its all-time Major League Baseball roster, as former first-round draft picks Taylor Tankersley and Jeremy Brown earned big league promotions.

Tankersley and Brown give the Crimson Tide 57 Major League players in its history, more than any other team in the SEC. LSU is second with 56 big league players, followed by Florida (48) and Tennessee (42).

Tankersley was promoted to the Florida Marlins

for the first time in his career after having a stellar season at Double A Carolina in the Southern League. He went 4-1 with a 0.95 ERA, striking out 40 while walking 14, and earning six saves in 22 appearances.

At publication, Tankersley had appeared in 17 games for the Marlins with a 1.69 ERA, recording one win and two saves while allowing seven hits in 10 and two third innings of work. He had allowed just two earned runs and struck out 13 batters.

Brown was recalled by the Oakland Athletics on Thursday, June 2. Brown previously spent a couple of days with the Athletics in May, but had yet to see action in the Majors.

At Triple A Sacramento, Brown hit .290 (29-for-100) with six home runs and 15 RBI. He has added four doubles and scored 13 runs in 28 games with the River Cats in the Pacific Coast League.

Alabama has four current Major League Players, including Andy Phillips (NY Yankees), Dustan Mohr (Boston), Tankersley and Brown. Two other players, Lance Cormier (Atlanta) and Paul Phillips (Kansas City), have also played in the big league and in Triple A this season.

SEC Vs. Big East

The Southeastern Conference and Big East Conference will participate in a men's basketball showcase beginning in December, 2007. The agreement is for a three-year cycle with four games between schools from the conferences each year. Four SEC and four Big East teams will participate in each year with all 12 SEC teams participating over the three-year term. Specific match-ups will be determined at a later date.

The games will be played on December 5 and 6 in 2007, December 10 and 11 in 2008, and December 9 and 10 in 2009. Two neutral sites—one in SEC territory and one Big East site—will host two games each year. All games will be televised by either ESPN or ESPN2.

Gold Winner

Alabama swimmer Vlad Polyakov, representing his native Kazakhstan, became a World Champion at the 2006 Fina World Short Course Swimming Championships being held in Shanghai.

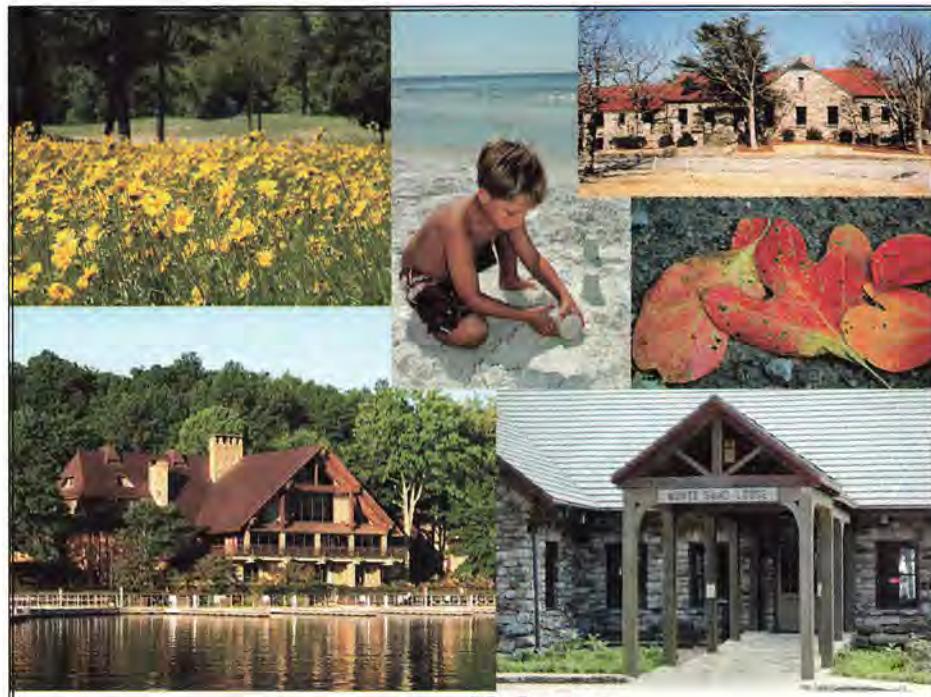
Polyakov, a rising senior at Alabama, won the 200 breaststroke with a 2:06.95 in a thrilling showdown with Australia's Brenton Rickard. Rickard led the first half of the race before Polyakov chased him down over the last 100-meters to take the gold.

It was Kazakhstan's first gold medal at the World Championships. Polyakov won bronze medals in the 100 and 200 breaststroke at the 2004 World Championships held in Indianapolis and was a finalist in both those events at the 2004 Olympics.

Polyakov is the two-time defending SEC 100 and 200 breaststroke champion and the SEC record holder in the 200. He is also the school record holder in the 100 and 200 breaststrokes and as part of the 200 and 400 medley relays. He has finished in the top two in the 200 breaststroke in each of his first three NCAA Championships, including a first place finish in 2005.

Two Golfers Honored

Alabama golfer Joseph Sykora, with a 4.0 grade point average in accounting, was named the 2006 Southeastern Conference Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award. The Daphne native is in his third year at the University. He was a redshirt on the 2004 Crimson Tide golf team as a true freshman



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and helped lead the Tide to the NCAA tournament last season and likely again in 2006 when the field is announced on May 8. Sykora played in all five of Alabama's fall tournaments this season but missed much of the spring with an injury. He has healed now and played in Alabama's last two events, including the SEC Championships.

His teammate, freshman Matthew Swan of Montgomery, was second team All-SEC. The two-time U.S. Amateur participant led Alabama's golf team with his 72.73 stroke average in 11 tournaments. He finished among the top 10 in three events, including third at the SEC Championships, and finished among the top 25 in eight out of 11 tournaments.

Ryans and Bentley Are UA's Top Scholar Athletes

All-America linebacker DeMeco Ryans and All-SEC tennis player Ashley Bentley were recipients of the 2006 Paul W. Bryant Award. The Bryant Award is the highest honor given at the all-sports Awards Banquet. It recognizes the top male and the top female student-athlete at The Capstone based upon excellence in the areas of academics, athletics, and service and leadership to The University. (Former winners of this award include Tide Football Coach Mike Shula and Bama Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried.)

Alabama's head coaches and Director of Athletics Mal Moore were among those present to honor the student-athletes as The University celebrated their accomplishments in the classroom. More than 100 Crimson Tide student-athletes were inducted into 60 honoraries on campus this past academic year.

Male finalists for the Bryant Award included

Chuck Davis, basketball; Guido Arroyo, swimming and diving; Jeff Fedler, track and field; Emeel Salem, baseball; Sammy Struyf, tennis; and Joseph Sykora, men's golf. Women's finalists included Leigh Alexander, soccer; Mari Bayer, gymnastics; Bridget Fuentez, volleyball; Beth Mallory, track and field; Kate Mastin, basketball; Carina Sorensen, golf; Karissa Tuthill, swimming and diving; and Stephanie VanBrackle, softball.

The women's tennis team won the athletic department's award as the female team with the highest GPA (3.46), its second straight year to win the award. The men's swimming and diving team won the men's award (3.18).

Jim Wells' baseball team won the men's team Community Outreach award for the second year in a row. Several members of the team came to the aid of Hurricane Katrina victims by driving to Mississippi and helping families clean up homes destroyed by the hurricane. Don Staley's women's soccer team won on the women's side for participating in more than 1,000 hours of volunteer work during the academic year.

Six student-athletes were recognized for volunteer work throughout their Alabama careers. The six who accumulated, individually, more than 2,000 hours of outreach while at Alabama include Brodie Croyle (football), DeMeco Ryans (football), Freddie Roach (football), Lance Walker (golf), Allison DeLisle (soccer) and Dana Pierce (gymnastics).

Former Coach Joins Battle

The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) announced that former Alabama Swimming and Diving Coach Don Gambril, who coached numerous swimmers to national championships and Olympic

gold medals, has been elected to the USADA Board of Directors to serve in the newly-created coach board member position.

"I hope I can add something valuable to their efforts," Gambril said. "I am very much opposed to any type of drugs or supplements taken to enhance performance. Anything and everything should be done to strengthen the effort to block their use."

Gambril, who resides in Tuscaloosa, served as the head coach for the 1984 U.S. Olympic Swimming Team and was an assistant coach for the sport's 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980 U.S. Olympians. He started his coaching career at the high school level and as a collegiate coach compiled a 350-60 record during stints at Pasadena City College, Long Beach State, Harvard and Alabama, where he went 270-49. He is an 11-time Hall of Fame inductee who has been honored by International Swimming, Alabama Sports, College Swimming Coaches, American Swimming Coaches, The University of Alabama and five other collegiate Halls of Fame.

Bama Golfer Wins Greystone Invitational

Mark Harrell, a 2005 United States Amateur participant who will be a junior on the Alabama's golf team this fall, won the championship at the Greystone Invitational in Birmingham. The Hazelhurst, Georgia native had three birdies and no bogeys in his final round to claim the win. Harrell shot 69-68-69/206 to finish the tournament at ten under par on Greystone Country Club's Legacy Course. His Alabama teammate, Gator Todd of Florence, finished third. Todd, who will also be a junior at Alabama this fall, shot 70-67-71/208 to finish eight under par and two strokes back. ■



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

Although I am in the information business, I usually do not want to have football news in the summer. That news more often than not is bad. Such was the case this summer when one of the leaders (and few returning starters) of the Alabama defense was arrested and charged with a couple of misdemeanors that likely would rise to a pretty high level of seriousness in the office of Crimson Tide Head Coach Mike Shula.

One charge involved possession of marijuana and the other possession of a stolen pistol. Those bare bones charges should alarm anyone who cheers for Bama. An examination of the merits of the arrest on I-20/59 in Bessemer by something known as the Violent Crimes Task Force should raise eyebrows, if not a comfort level. But the guilt or innocence or the level of concern is not our issue.

And neither is what, if any, discipline is administered by Shula.

His fellow players think he "messed up," and those teammates are as mystified as any how one of the most respected members of this football team could be in such a situation. Juwan Simpson has already earned one degree (in Financial Planning), is working on another (Criminal Justice), and has been Academic All-Southeastern Conference. He was winner of the Derrick Thomas Community Service Award for his off-campus volunteer work.

His teammates also say he is paying a price, but they stop short of saying what that is. "That's his business and Coach Shula's business," said defensive end Wallace Gilberry.

"We're preparing to have Juwan the whole year," said cornerback Ramzee Robinson. "It was a surprise, because he's got such high character. But he's bounced back. He's the same guy. And his teammates have been supportive."

Quarterback John Parker Wilson went afoul of the law and of Shula with an alcohol-related driving incident last year. "He's pretty tough," Wilson said. "Fair, but if you mess up, it's going to be tough."

Wilson added that Shula "talks a lot about behavior. He spends a lot of time in meetings on it. We call Thursday meetings 'Character Meetings.' He talks about doing what's right and about not doing what's wrong, and the consequences if you don't."

One of the tasks that goes with being the head football coach is taking responsibility for over 100 young men. Are all 100-plus always going to do right? Of course not.

When one inevitably does wrong, the coach then has the responsibility to discipline that player.

When Simpson's arrest was announced there were a few Alabama followers ready to have him tossed from the team, even though few facts were known. That would be taking everything from a young man who has been 99 per cent on track. It would also be punishing his teammates, who are relying on him this fall. And it would hardly serve anyone's best interest.

A larger number of Alabama followers were likely in favor of a lighter punishment, and felt it was Shula's responsibility to share details of that punishment with the public. Years ago there was a coach at another school who made a blustery announcement of how many stadium steps he was making a transgressor run. When it turned out a few months later that the player had not been attending class, that punishment seemed nothing more than something to fill his time and get him in better shape.

Shula is not going to announce the penalty or penalties meted his players. That certainly doesn't make those penalties less severe. Simpson's teammates say he is getting plenty of conditioning work this summer. Additional penalties may or may not be discerned later. But that is, as Gilberry said, the business of the player and the coach.

Sincerely,

Kirk McNair

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